

# 101 American English Proverbs

Understanding Language and Culture  
Through Commonly Used Sayings

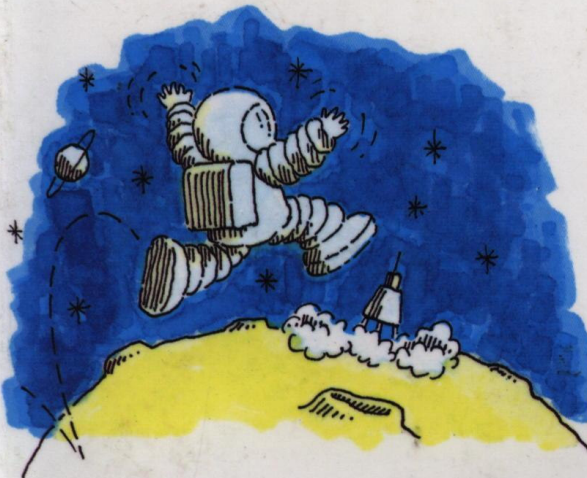
Curiosity Killed the Cat



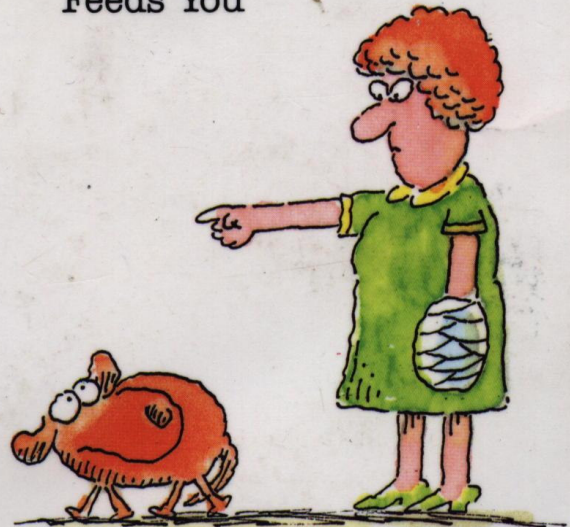
When in Rome Do As the Romans Do



Better Late Than Never



Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds You



Harry Collis

Illustrated by Mario Risso

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**Are not present:** *Don't cry over spilt milk, Don't judge a book by its cover, If at first you don't succeed, try, try again, Necessity is the mother of invention*

# Foreword

Proverbs, by stating basic principles of folk wisdom and conduct, have become an essential and enduring part of daily speech in all societies. Very often the precepts of one culture are precepts of another, for they are an outgrowth of common experiences.

Each language has its own proverbs. The phrasing is unique and contributes to the color of the language. But whatever the phraseological turns, many proverbs convey similar meanings in different forms. For example, the Spanish proverb *Dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres* ("Tell me with whom you associate, and I'll tell you who you are") finds an equivalent in the English proverb *A man is known by the company he keeps*. The French *Jamais deux sans trois* ("Never two without three") corresponds to the English *It never rains but it pours*.

Proverbs are relatively easy for nonnative speakers to learn and use. Once the concept of the proverb is understood, students can often relate it to similar concepts, in their own languages—whereas correct, natural usage of idioms requires more practice and a better "feel" for the language.

**101 American English Proverbs** is designed to help students of English understand and use proverbs that relate to everyday situations. The proverbs in this book are grouped in nine thematic sections, in order to facilitate student understanding and acquisition of proverbs for use in particular contexts. Within each section the proverbs are listed alphabetically.

The proverbs included in **101 American English Proverbs** are among those that are most familiar to and most frequently used by native speakers of English. Each proverb is presented in its most common form together with a standard English definition. It must be noted that many of the proverbs have variant forms as well as more than one possible meaning. Students are unlikely to be troubled by this flexibility if they reflect on its presence in the proverbs of their native languages. The wordings and definitions selected for this book are intended to help students achieve a basic understanding of each proverb.

A cartoon and a short paragraph or dialogue are provided to help illustrate the meaning and usage of each proverb. The paragraphs and dialogues serve two purposes: to give an understanding of the proverb in a normal everyday setting and to enhance the student's awareness of natural American speech. To this end they include many contemporary expressions. These expressions should not deter from the basic comprehension of the proverb. The illustrations add an element of humor while helping to convey the meaning of each proverb. An index is included to facilitate recall and location of the proverbs. The standard English definitions for the proverbs are also listed in the index.

**101 American English Proverbs** is an excellent tool for teaching an aspect of English that is such an integral part of the language. This book also serves as a springboard for conversation about some of the similarities and differences between various languages and cultures. Both nonnative and native speakers of English will benefit from and enjoy the wealth of linguistic and cultural information to be found in this selection of 101 American English proverbs.

## **Section One**

# **All Together Now**

# Birds of a Feather Flock Together



**(people of the same type seem to gather together)**

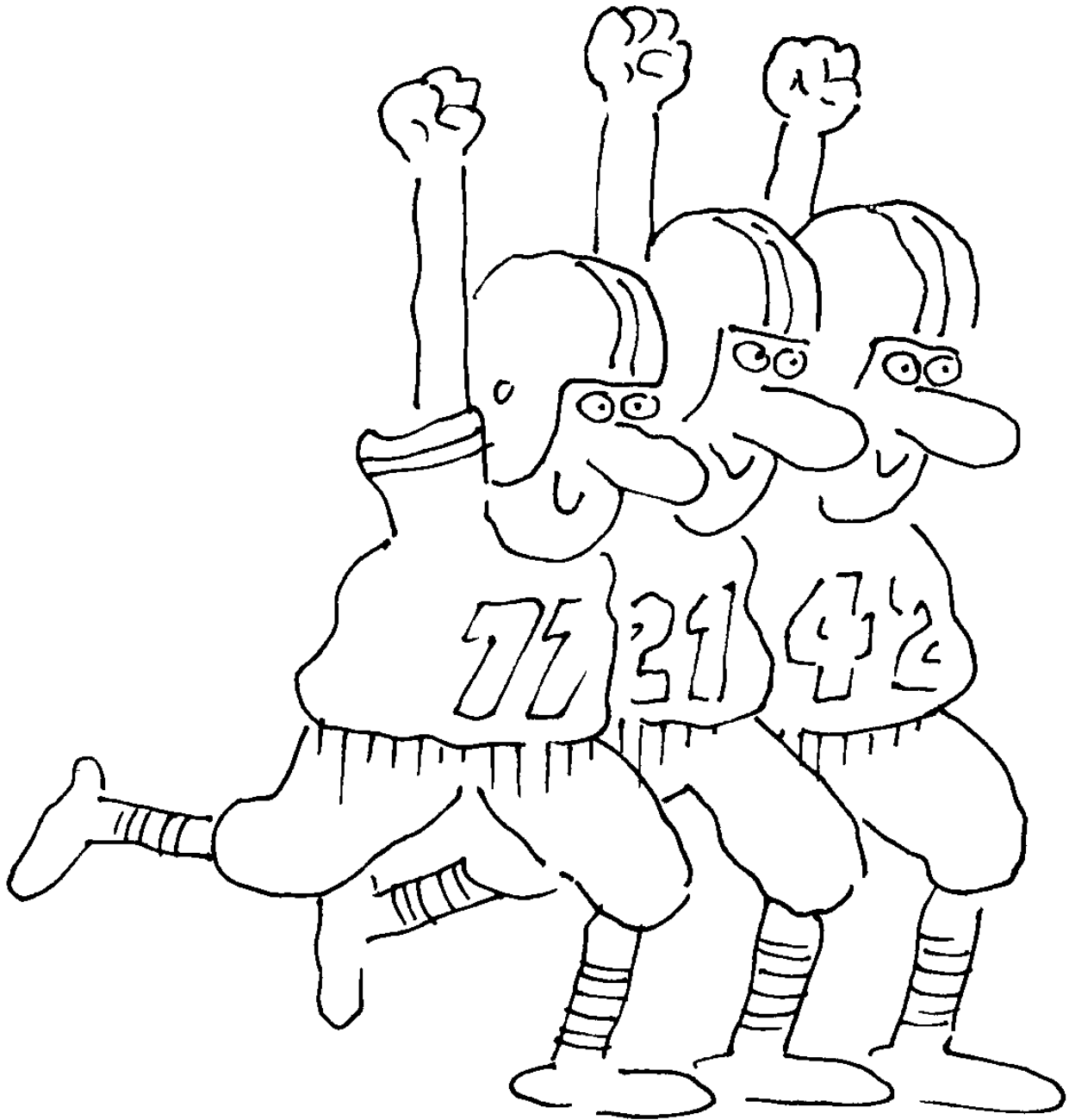
I haven't seen Mark lately. Do you know where he's been?

As far as I know, he's still hanging around with those rock musicians. He's been attending their rehearsals, hoping to pick up a few pointers.

**Birds of a feather flock together.** I know he wants to start his own group, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised that he hasn't had much time for his buddies. Still, I'd like to hear from him just to see how it's going.

**People with the same interests do tend to associate with each other.** But I agree with you; that's no excuse for not keeping in touch with old friends.

# In Unity There Is Strength



**(a group of people with the same goals can accomplish more than individuals can)**

If we want better working conditions, we've got to get together and make up a list of grievances to present to the administration.

But what makes you think they'll listen to us?

**In unity there is strength!** We won't get anywhere by complaining individually. **We can accomplish more as a group than we can by ourselves.**

That makes sense. Let's call a meeting of all the employees of the shop. We can pin down our demands and present a united front. Maybe we'll get someplace this time.



# It Takes Two to Tango



**(when two people work as a team, they are both responsible for the team's successes and failures)**

Look how crooked the linoleum is along the edges of the wall. It looks just awful!

I never said I was an expert in laying linoleum. Besides, **it takes two to tango.**

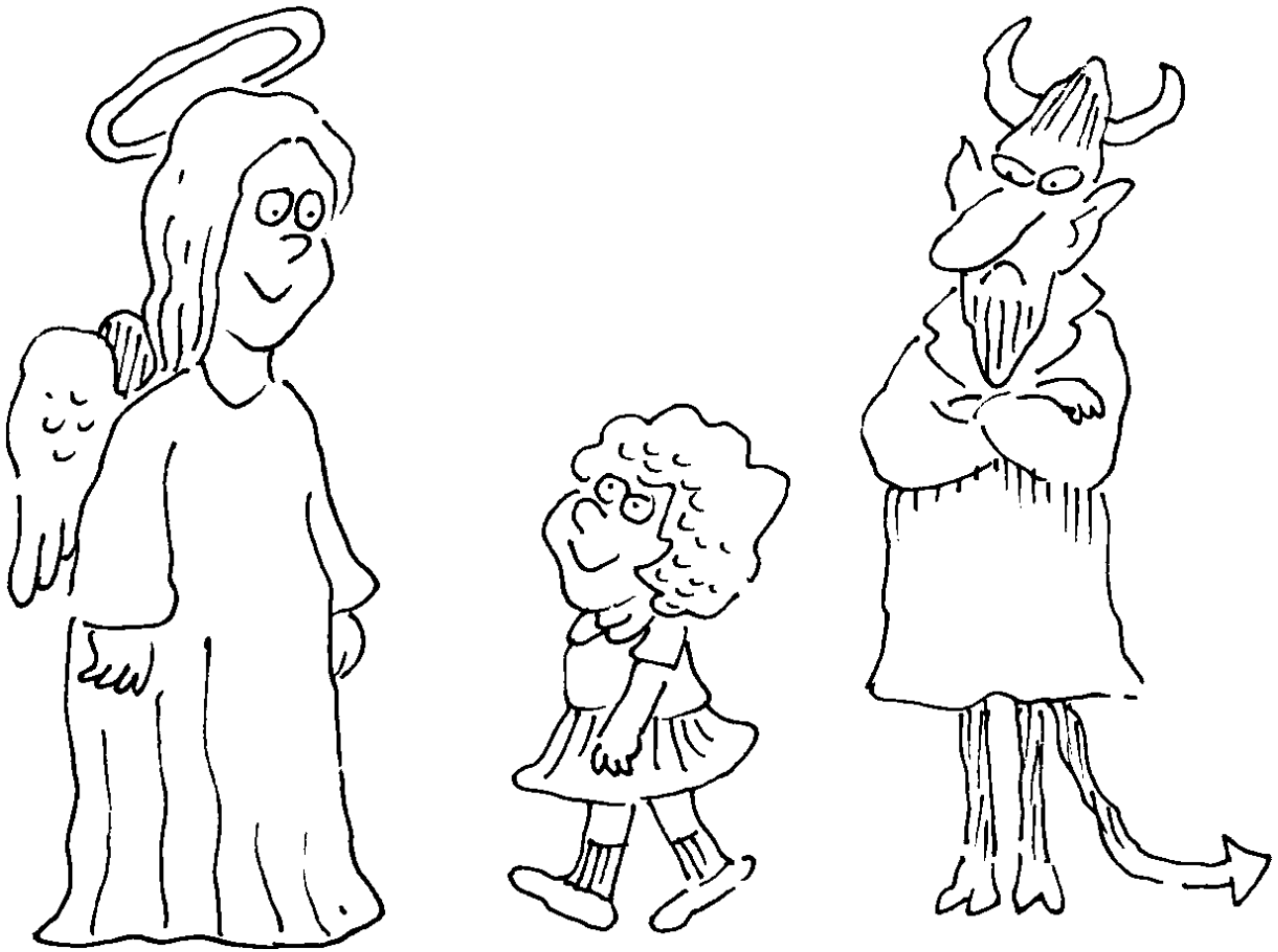
Just what do you mean by that?

Well, you're the one who gave me the measurements. If the job turned out badly **it was just as much your fault as it was mine.**

Maybe so, but if you'll remember, I wanted to hire a professional to do the job. You were the one who thought we should save money by doing it ourselves.

I guess we both learned a lesson. Next time we'll know better.

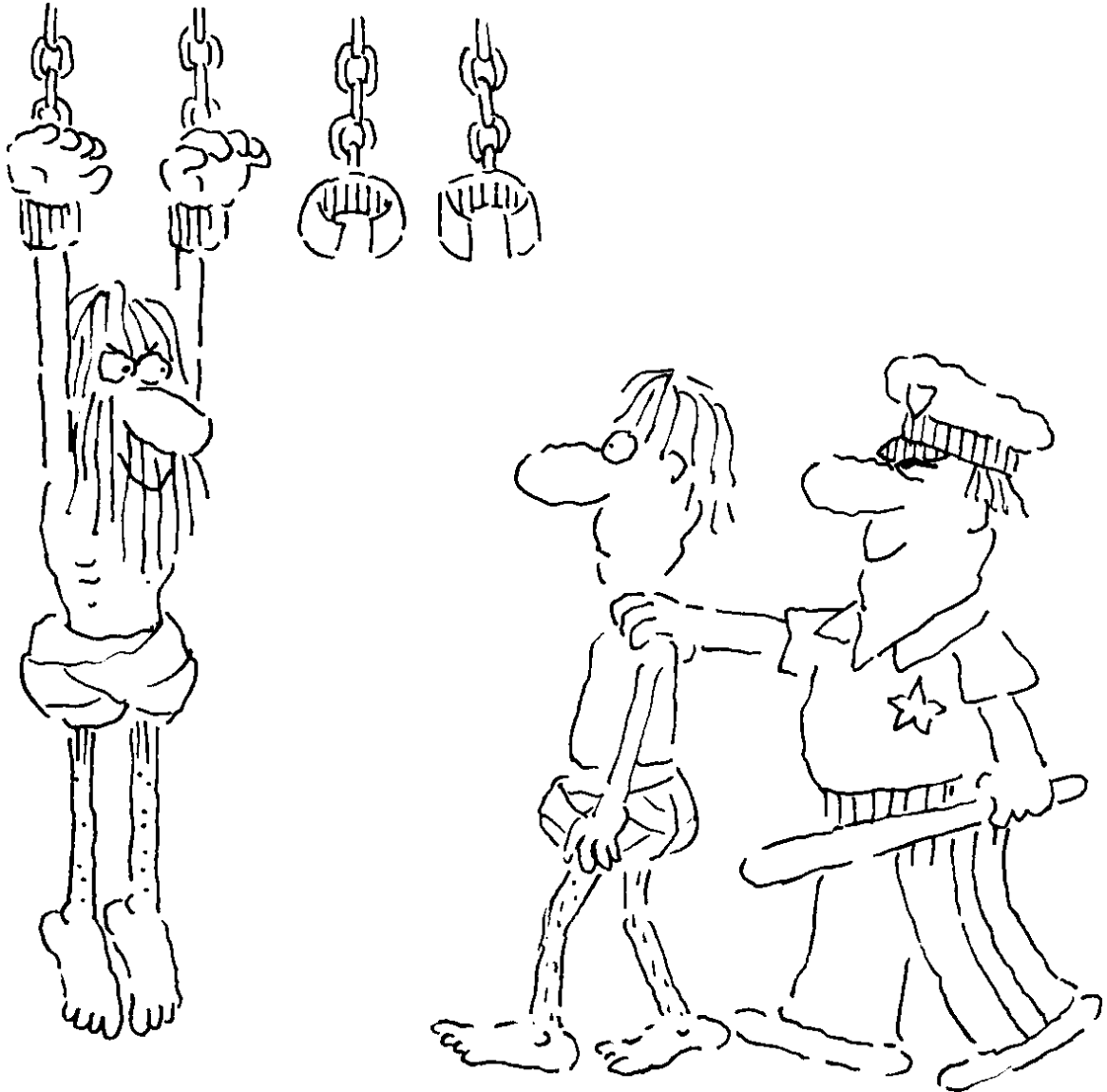
# A Man Is Known by the Company He Keeps



**(a person is believed to be like the people with whom he or she spends time)**

Come here, Glenn. As your friend, I've got to tell you that people are starting to wonder why you're hanging around with all those anti-government demonstrators. Look. We've been friends ever since our college days. I'm not doing anything wrong. Maybe not, but since you work for a government agency, you've got to be more careful about who you associate with. **A man is known by the company he keeps.** Guilty by association. Is that it? Unfortunately, yes. **People often believe that a person is like his friends.** Boy, what a hassle! Now what do I do? If I were you, I'd cool it with those pals of yours for a while.

# Misery Loves Company



**(unhappy people often get satisfaction from having others share their misery)**

Hey Misha, what's wrong?

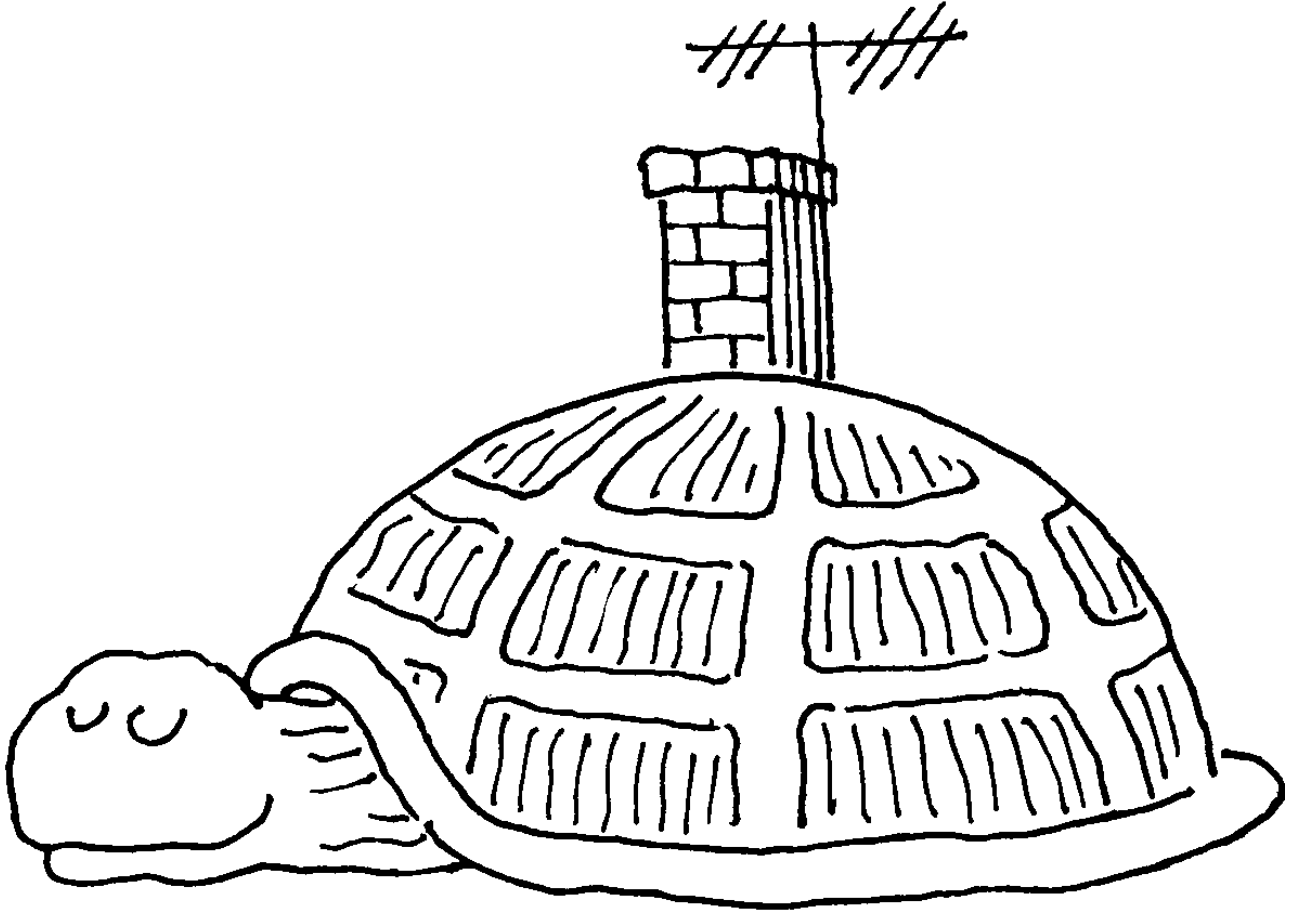
Oh, I just had a run-in with my math teacher over the grading of my last exam. Although I got a wrong answer on one of the problems, I did use a correct equation and he refused to give me even partial credit.

Don't feel so blue. You're not alone. I'm kind of in the same boat myself, only with my history teacher. I got a really low grade because she didn't like my essay.

Although **misery loves company**, I don't feel any better knowing that you're in the same predicament.

At least I tried. I thought **you might get some comfort from knowing that someone else shared your misery.**

# There's No Place like Home



**(a person is happiest with his or her family and friends)**

Pamela was fond of traveling, and she always enjoyed seeing exotic lands and peoples. However, after experiencing the thrill of cultures other than her own for a while, she would eventually begin to yearn for her native land and to think that **there's no place like home**. The museums, the architecture, the food, the music, and the culture of faraway places fascinated Pamela, but she never forgot that **the place where she felt the happiest and most comfortable was in her own home with her family and friends**.

# Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth



(too many people trying to take care of something  
can ruin it)

What are you doing, Benito?

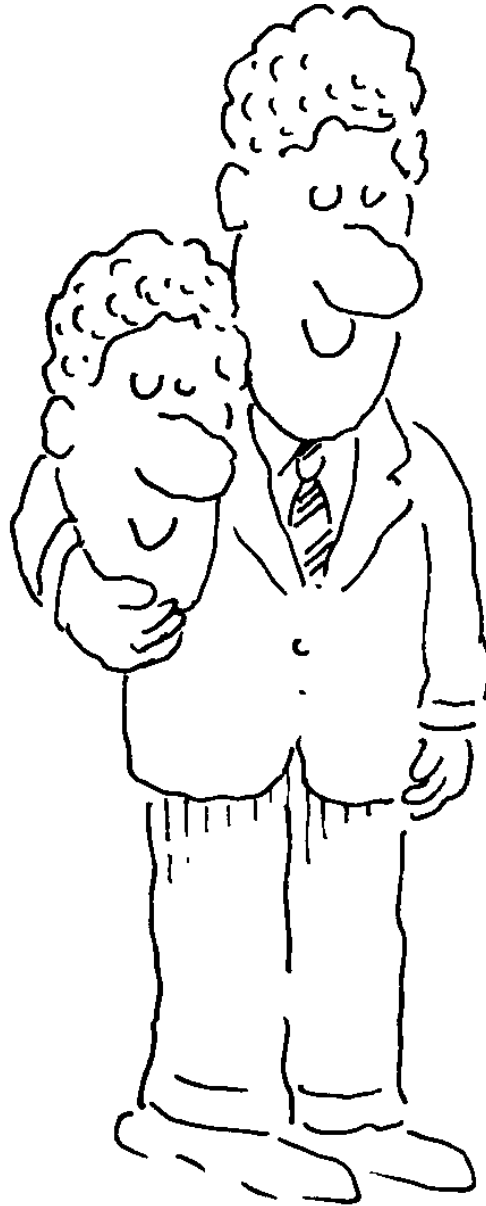
I'm trying to fix the copy machine. I'll have it going again soon if everybody stops making suggestions.

Well, you can't blame the other employees for being impatient to run off their materials. They just want to help you.

Yeah, **but too many cooks spoil the broth**. They really don't know what they're doing, and if I listened to their advice this would never get fixed. I'm the guy with the experience, and **I don't want to have the machine ruined by too many people trying to fix it**. Just let me be, and I'll handle it on my own.



# Two Heads Are Better Than One



**(two people working together can solve a problem quicker and better than a person working alone)**

Hey, Jonathan. Come over here a minute.

What's happening?

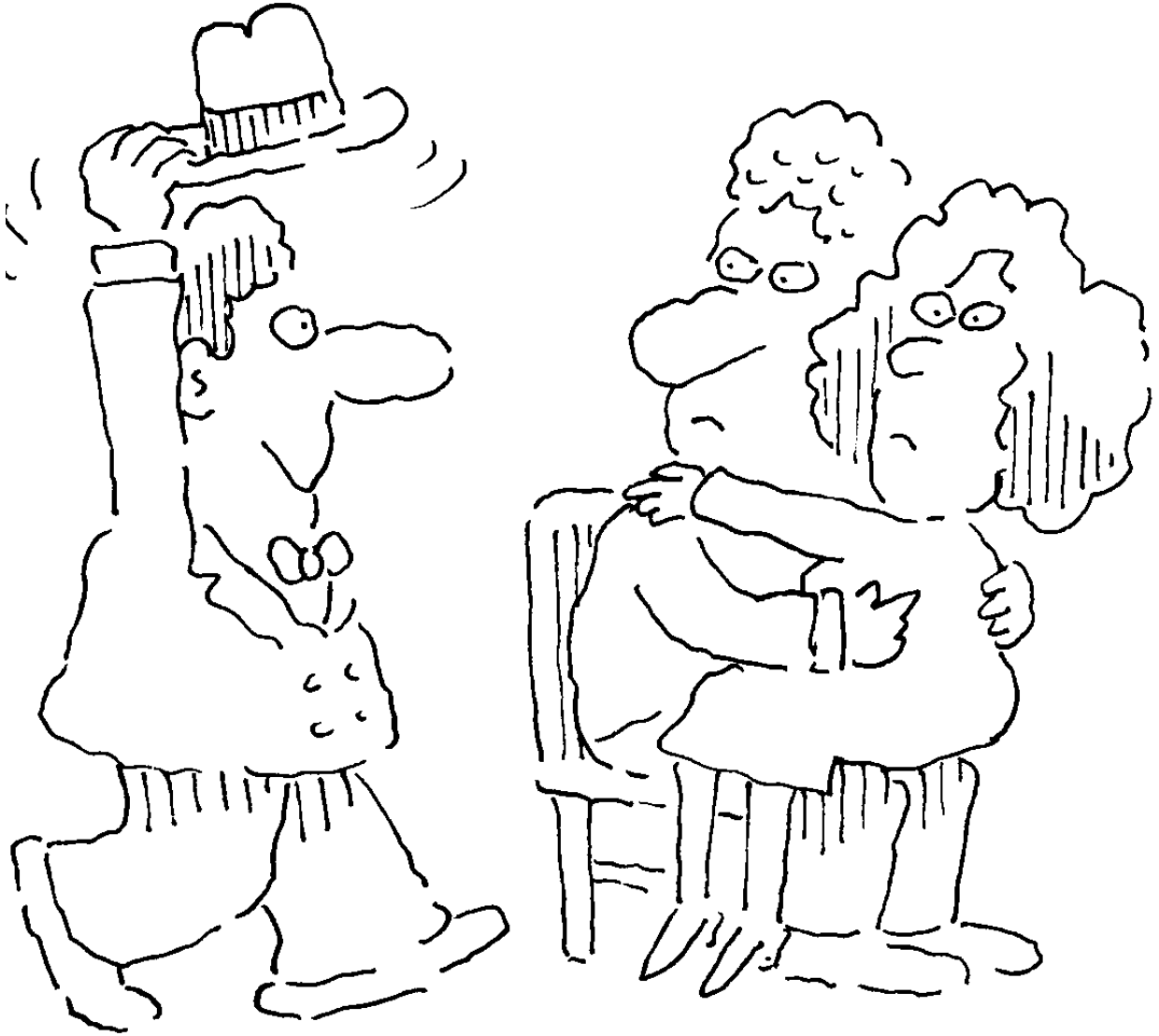
I'd like to pick your brain for this composition I have to hand in tomorrow. I've got a problem with the introduction, and I figure that **two heads are better than one**. I need some input on the wording.

To be honest with you, I'm not that good with words, but I'm willing to help out if I can.

Thanks, buddy. My brain is all dried up. I'm sure **the two of us working together will be able to solve this problem faster than I could do it alone**.

Well, I'll give it my best shot. Let me look at what you've already written and we'll take it from there.

# Two's Company, but Three's a Crowd



**(couples often enjoy their privacy and dislike having a third person around)**

How did your date with Nari go the other night?

Everything started out OK, but just as we started to talk seriously about our plans for the future, Bob came barging in and interrupted our conversation.

What a pain! **Two's company, but three's a crowd.**

You said it! I wanted to take him aside and tell him that Nari and I were having a serious conversation and that **his presence was an intrusion on our privacy**, but when I remembered how few friends he has since he's new in town, I decided not to say anything.

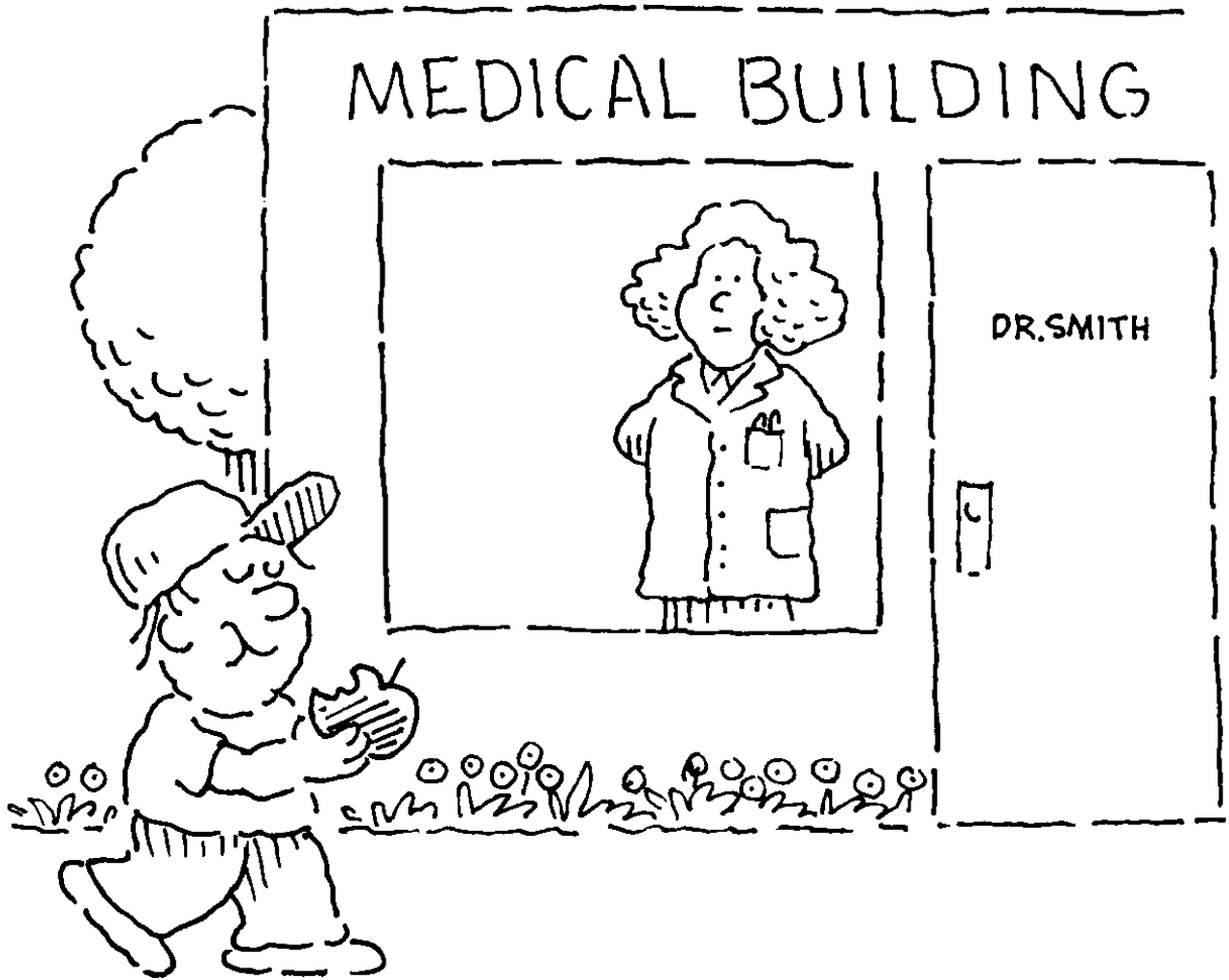
Did you ever get back to your conversation?

Yeah. We were able to pick it up again after Bob left.

## **Section Two**

# **Try This**

# An Apple a Day Keeps the Doctor Away



**(eating an apple every day helps a person to stay healthy)**

Boy, do I ever feel lousy! I don't have any energy lately.

Have you been eating a lot of junk food?

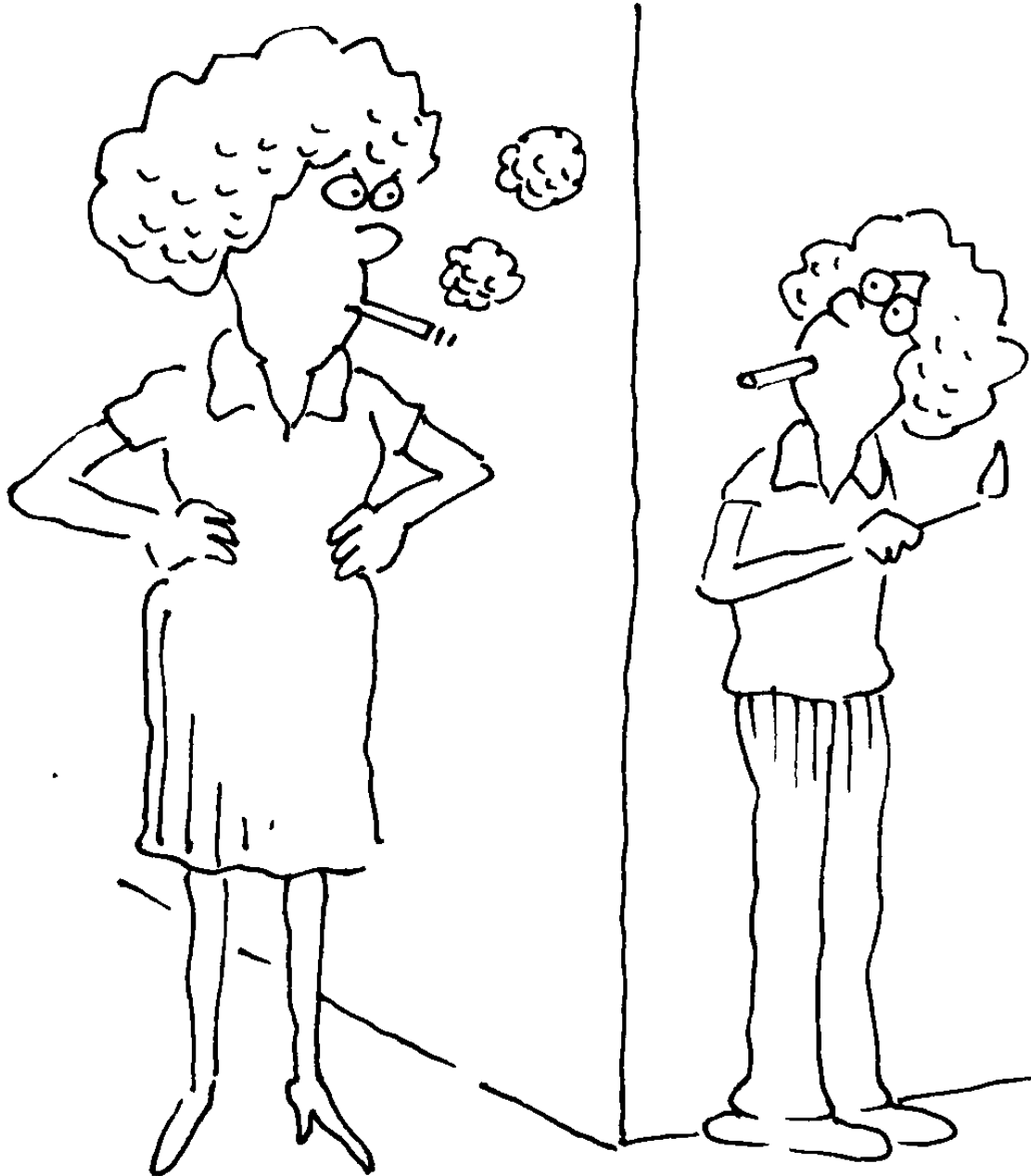
Now that you mention it, I have, but I don't think that alone could account for my fatigue. It's got to be something else. I'm going to see my doctor tomorrow and have her check me out.

Fine—but in the future, that might not be necessary if you watch what you eat. Don't you know that **an apple a day keeps the doctor away?**

Sure. I've heard that proverb before, but I've never taken it seriously. I can't believe that just **by eating one apple a day I'll stay healthy and strong and won't ever need to see a doctor.**

Try it! You might like it. What do you have to lose?

# Do As I Say, Not As I Do



**(follow my advice, but don't follow my example)**

For heaven's sake, Dave. You smell like a chimney. How many times do I have to tell you that smoking is going to eat out your lungs and take years off your life?

You can talk all you want—but look at you!

Never mind me. Do as I say, **not** as I do.

But you've been smoking ever since you were a teenager.

Just because I made a mistake doesn't mean you have to repeat it. I'm telling you to **follow my advice, not my example.**

OK. You win. I'll try. But why don't we *both* try to stop? Maybe we can help each other out.

You're on. I'll give it a whirl.



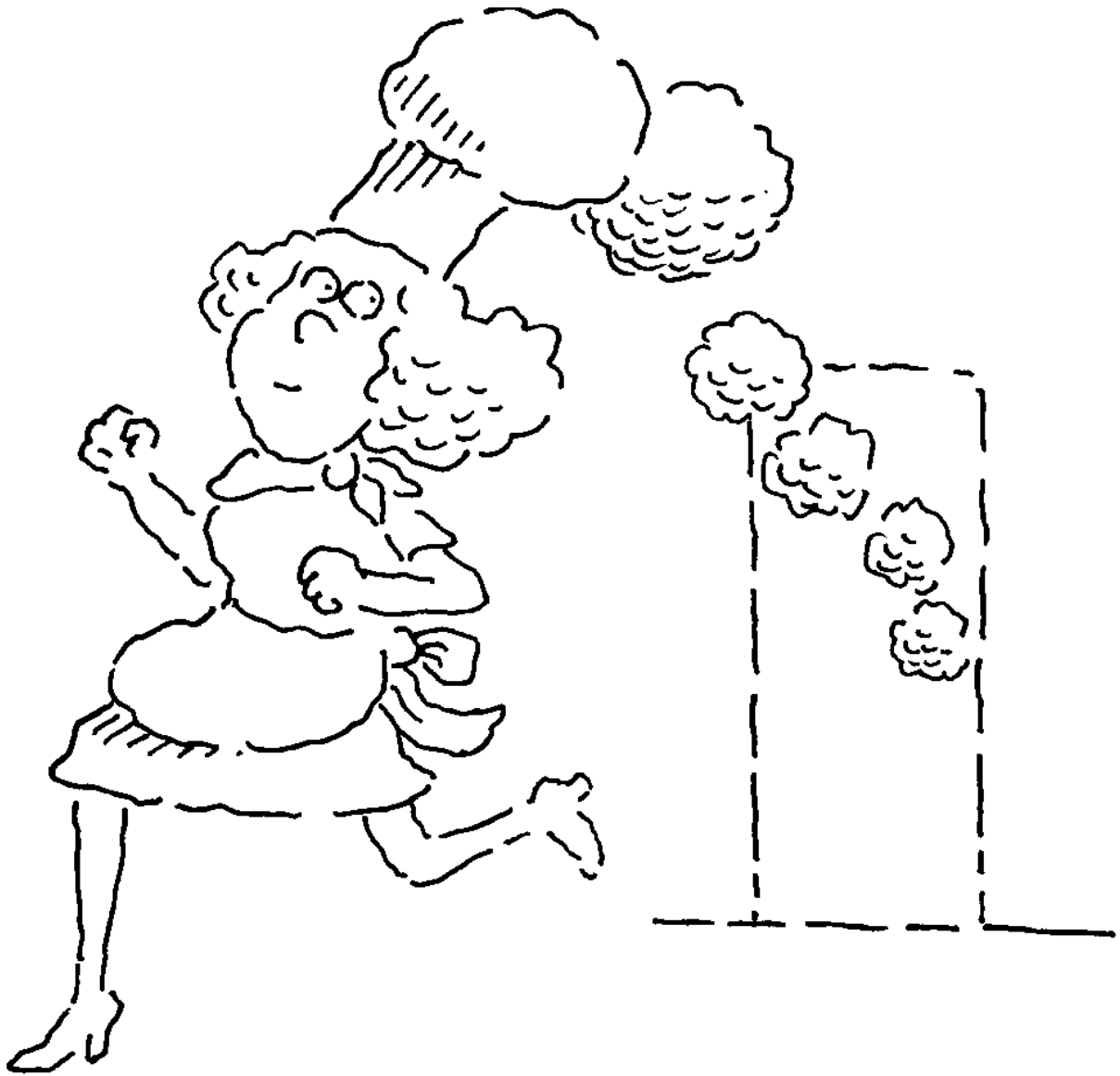
# If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them



(if you can't defeat your opponents, join forces with them)

Mrs. Kowalski had never been much of a sports fan— unlike her husband and two children. On weekends the others would take in either a baseball or a football game, while she stayed home alone. After a while the situation became a source of great annoyance to her. One weekend, to the utter amazement of her husband and children, she announced that she wanted to attend the football game with them. She thought, **If you can't beat them, join them.** Mrs. Kowalski realized that **since she could not talk her family out of attending the games, she might as well join them in one of their favorite pastimes.** By joining her family on the weekends she would alleviate her loneliness, and in time she might even come to like sports as much as her husband and children did.

# If You Can't Stand the Heat, Get Out of the Kitchen



**(if you can't tolerate the pressures of a particular situation, remove yourself from that situation)**

When Chris got a position as a legal secretary with one of the most prestigious law firms in the city, he was elated. However, it was not long before he became snowed under with work. As the pressures of the job increased, he began to complain about the long hours and the excessive amount of work. One day, after a fellow employee heard him complain once again about the stack of paperwork on his desk, she quite bluntly told him: **If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.** Actually, Chris had been thinking about quitting. After only three months on the job, it became apparent to him that **since he could not handle the pressures of the job, he should leave the firm** and seek employment elsewhere. The only reason he had been hanging on was because good jobs were so hard to come by.

# Leave Well Enough Alone



**(don't try to improve something that is already satisfactory)**

Greetings, Vicki. What have you been up to lately?

Oh, I've been busy working on my sculpture for the spring art exhibition. I'm just not satisfied with the symmetry between the head and the torso.

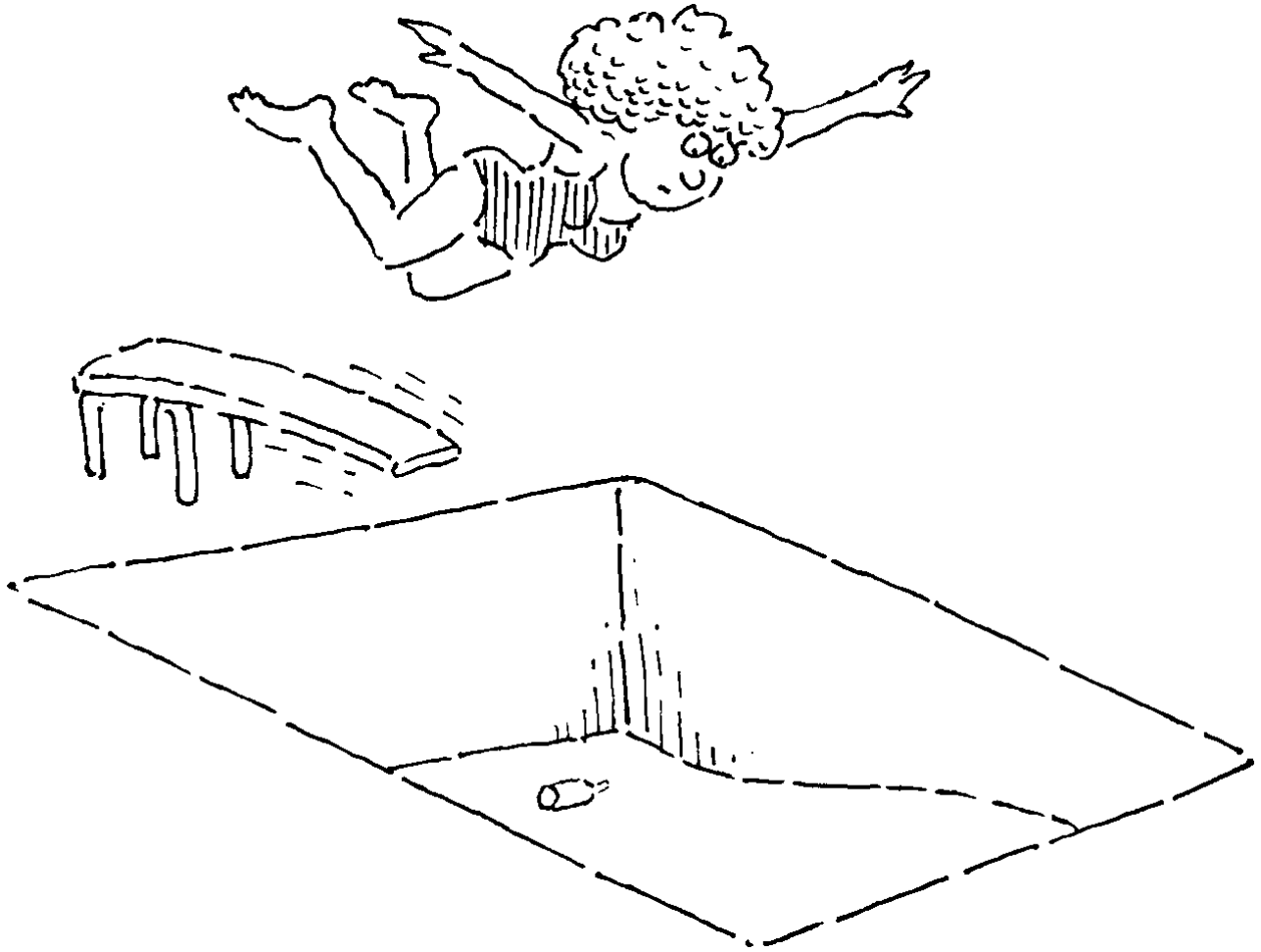
I'm no connoisseur, but when I saw your sculpture last week I was very impressed. Really, Vicki. Don't change a thing! **Leave well enough alone!** If you keep trying to improve your sculpture, you might end up ruining it.

Do you really think so?

Absolutely. **There's no reason for you to change something that is already satisfactory.**

Maybe you're right. I'll sleep on it and see how I feel about the whole thing tomorrow.

# Look before You Leap



**(consider all aspects of a situation before you take any action)**

You sure are concentrating! What's so interesting?

Oh. Hi, Ed. I didn't hear you come in. I'm thinking of investing in that shopping center going up near Tiburon Beach, so I was just reading about the proposed shops for the center.

If you want my opinion, I think **you should look before you leap**. That center is being built on a landfill. Aren't you wary of problems with settling, let alone an earthquake?

Have no fear! **I'm considering all aspects of the situation before I take any action**. But from what I've read so far, it sounds like a great investment.

# Make Hay While the Sun Shines



**(take advantage of an opportunity to do something)**

Come on, Jed. Don't be such a wet blanket! Come with us to the state fair.

I'd like to, but I'm swamped with work. Maybe next time.

That's what you're always saying, and next time never comes. You're young. **Make hay while the sun shines.** Trips like this one don't come around every day.

I'm really tempted, but I've got to finish this paperwork.

Meanwhile, life is passing you right by. **You should take advantage of an opportunity to do something when it's available.** Doesn't the fact that Mary Ann will be coming along tempt you?

Mary Ann is going?

Absolutely.

Well, maybe just this once I could take a break from working. OK. Count me in!



# Strike While the Iron Is Hot



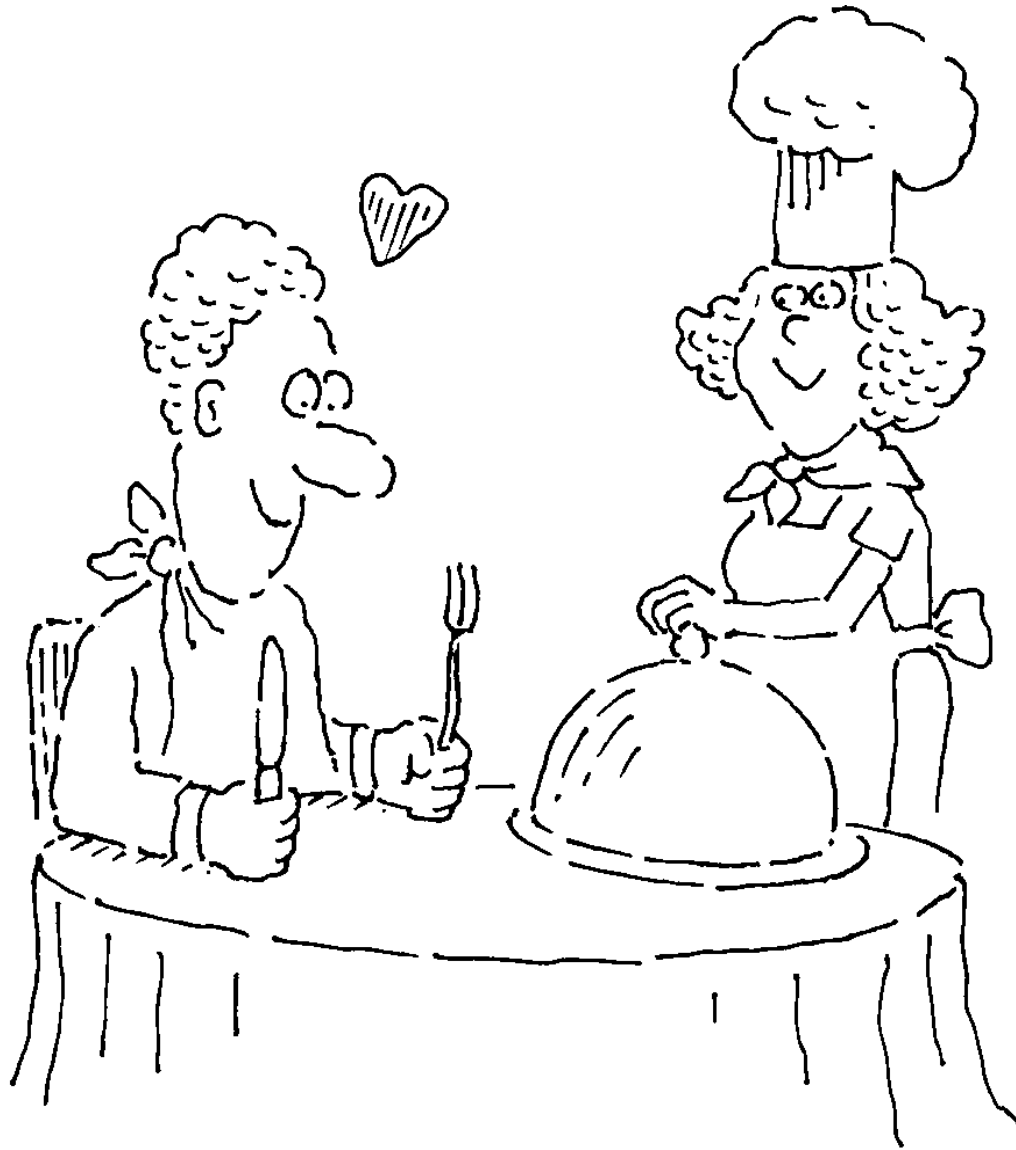
**(act at the best possible time)**

If you intend to make an offer on that house you were thinking of buying, now is the time to do it. But I can only offer considerably less than what the owner is asking. I don't know if she'll accept. I recommend that you **strike while the iron is hot**. It's a buyer's market right now. It's a good time to make an offer, even if it is low.

Hmm. I do like the house. I guess I'll give it a try. As you said, **my chances for success are greater if I act at the best possible time**.

That's right. If you make an offer now, there's an excellent chance that it will be accepted.

# The Way to a Man's Heart Is through His Stomach



**(the way to gain a man's love is by preparing food that he enjoys)**

Wow, Ludmilla! You look beautiful! What's the big occasion?

I've got a date with Yuri. I hope that tonight he'll come out and tell me how much he cares for me.

You've been going with Yuri for quite some time. If he still hasn't expressed his feelings, I think you ought to try another approach. Have you ever stopped to think that **the way to a man's heart is through his stomach**? You're a fantastic cook. Why not invite him to a nice home-cooked meal?

Why didn't I think of that before? Tonight I'll invite him to have dinner at my place next weekend. There you go! **Prepare a meal that he enjoys, and he'll love you for sure!**

# When in Rome Do As the Romans Do



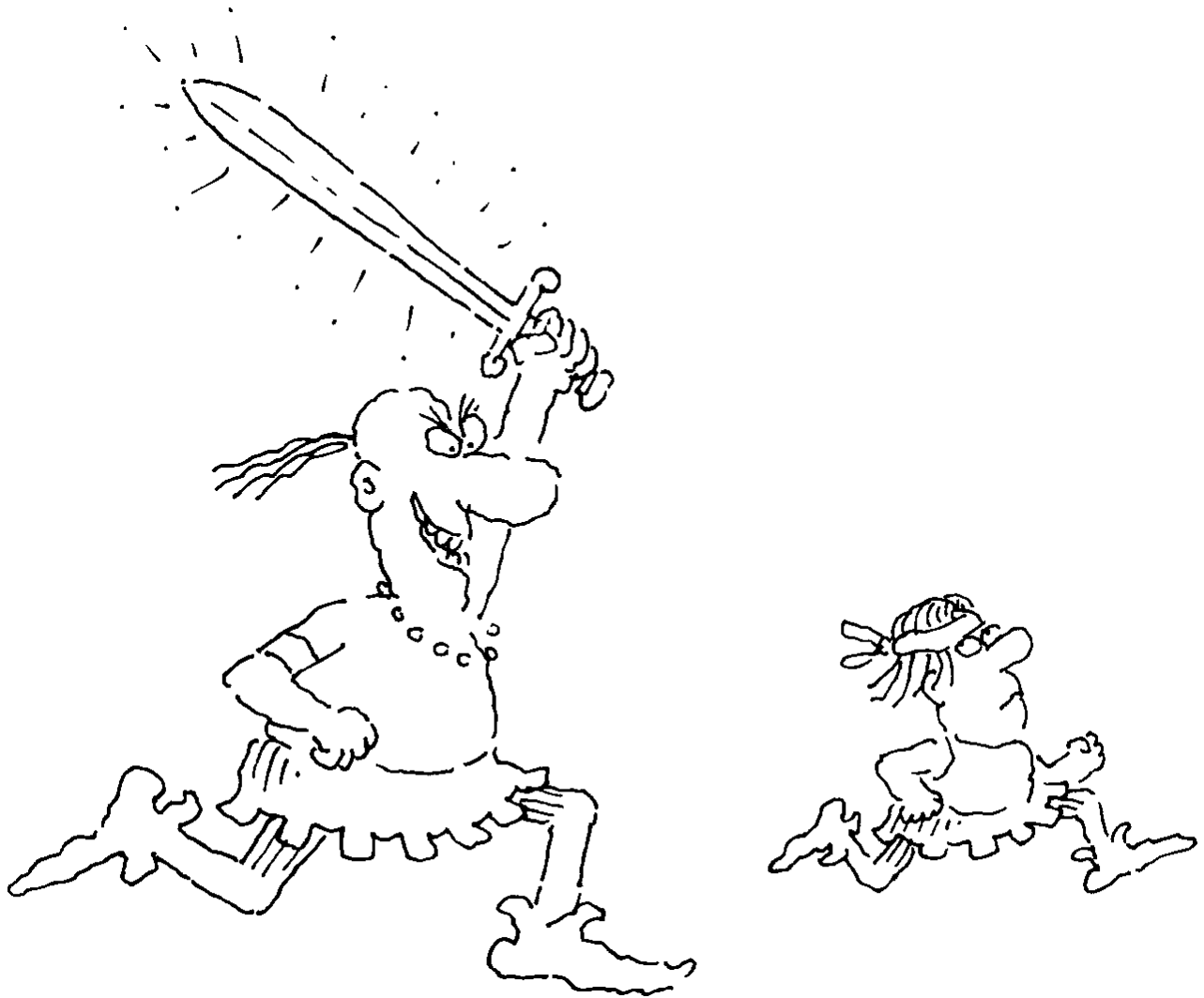
**(when traveling, follow the customs of the local people)**

Jane and Ray had been homebodies most of their lives, but after their kids were grown and out of the nest, they decided to take a trip around the world. Of course, they were inexperienced travelers and they had trouble accepting the customs of the people in the countries they visited. To make them feel more comfortable during their travels, some members of the tour group recommended that **when in Rome do as the Romans do**. They suggested that Jane and Ray **should make an effort to follow the customs of the local inhabitants** and not expect to behave in a foreign country as they would at home. Once they began to follow this advice, Jane and Ray enjoyed their trip much more.

## **Section Three**

# **Watch Out!**

# All That Glitters Is Not Gold



(some things are not as valuable as they appear to be)

Boy, Ahmed sure got taken the other day at the bazaar.

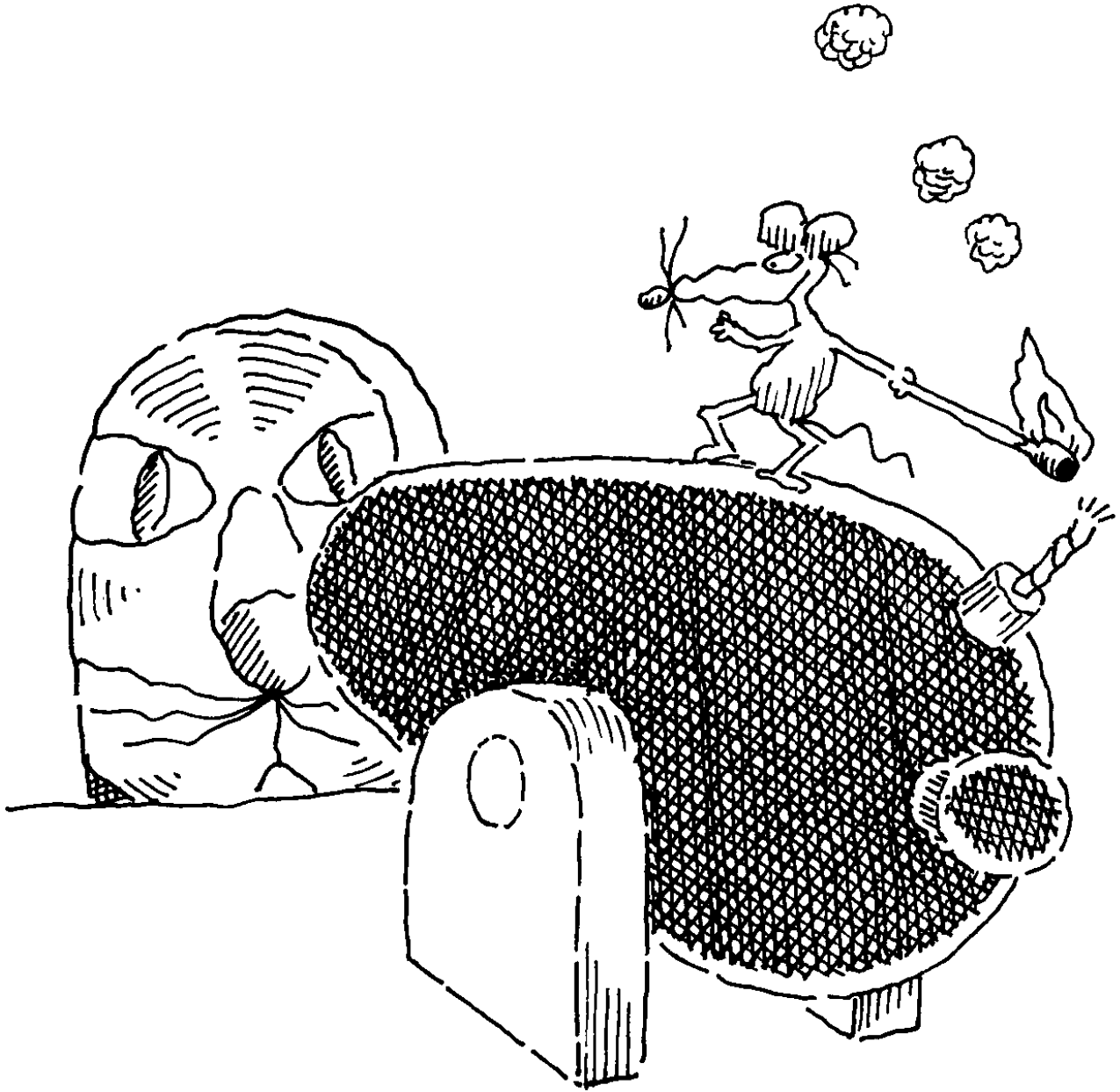
What happened?

You know he collects old swords and sabers. Well, he came across a neat, shining scimitar in one of the booths. The guy assured him that it dated from the fifteenth century and that it would never rust. Ahmed was so excited with his find that he really didn't examine it very carefully before he took it home. That's when he discovered that the scimitar was coated to hide the rust and that it was a copy, not an original.

Just goes to prove that **all that glitters is not gold.**

That's for sure! Ahmed learned the hard way that **some things are not as valuable as they appear to be.**

# Curiosity Killed the Cat



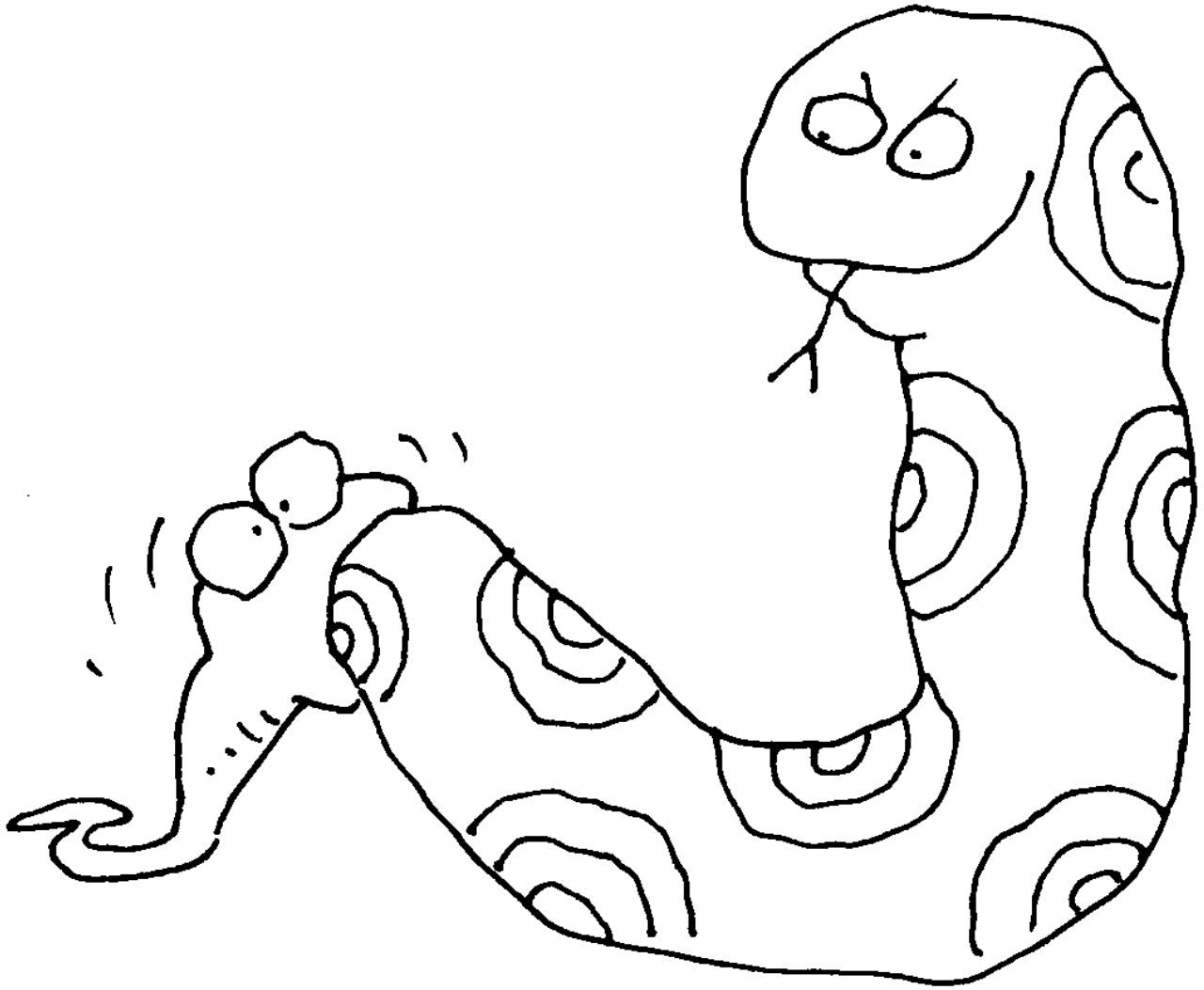
**(it is dangerous to be curious)**

Phil, you have no business trying to find out what will be on tomorrow's exam by shuffling through those papers on the teacher's desk. Just because she's out of the room doesn't give you the right to go poking in her personal papers. What do you think will happen to you if she walks in and catches you? Don't you realize that **curiosity killed the cat?**

If I don't pass this exam, I probably won't pass the course. I know **I could be severely punished for going into her personal papers**, but I'm desperate!

OK. But it's your funeral! Sooner or later your curiosity will do you in.

# Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew



**(don't assume more responsibility than you can handle; don't be overconfident)**

Hold on there, Sam. Where are you running off to?

Oh, hi Lloyd. Can't stop to chat. I'm already late for work.

It seems like you're always busy lately. If it's not work, it's studies or something else. You don't have time for your friends anymore. When you took that full-time job I warned you: **Don't bite off more than you can chew!**

I think you were right. Now I see that **it was a mistake to take on too much responsibility all at once**. My grades in school are already starting to go down.

There you are! Why don't you cut down on your hours at work and maybe drop a course or two, at least for this semester?

Maybe I'll do that. At this rate my health is liable to suffer, too.

# Don't Bite the Hand That Feeds You



**(don't hurt someone who takes care of you)**

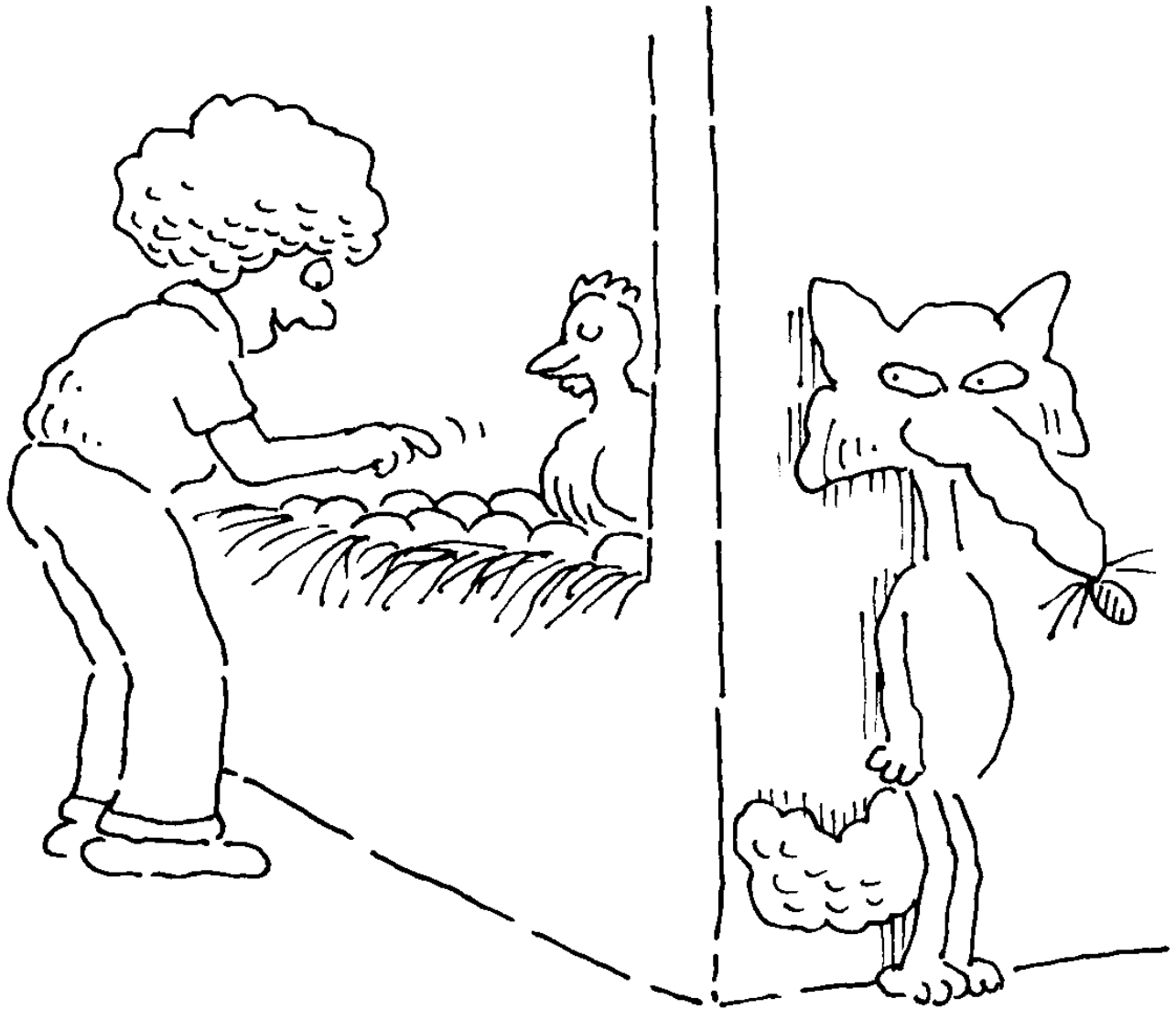
Julie, I simply can't understand you! I've worked my fingers to the bone and I've saved and scrimped to pay for your college education, and here you go running off to get married without finishing school. Hasn't anyone ever told you, "**Don't bite the hand that feeds you**"? You must know how disappointed I am!

I'm sorry, Dad. **I don't mean to hurt you after all you've done for me**, and I have every intention of going back to school after Al and I get settled. He's got a great job overseas, and he wants me to go with him as his wife.

Still, I find it difficult to approve of your decision to quit school now, when you're about to get your degree. Don't be hasty. Why don't you give this a little bit more thought?



# Don't Count Your Chickens Before They're Hatched



**(don't plan on the successful results of something until those results actually occur)**

Hi, Lydia. How are you doing with your book about the Indian tribes of the Amazon? I haven't found a publisher yet, but I know it will be a big success. I'm going to use the money from my advance royalties as a down payment on that condo I've been looking at.

**Don't count your chickens before they're hatched.** What if you can't find a publisher? I guess you're right. **I really should not count on getting any money until the book is actually accepted for publication.**

And even then the publishers may not advance you enough for a down payment on that condo. But don't despair. It's quite possible that someone out there will want to publish your book. I wish you all the best.

# Don't Judge a Man until You've Walked in His Boots



**(don't criticize a person until you've tried to do the things he or she does)**

Hi, Josh. Did you watch the gymnastic competitions on TV last night?

I sure did. Those guys were phenomenal on the bars and rings!

All except the short, blond guy. His performance was really weak. I don't see why he even bothered to compete.

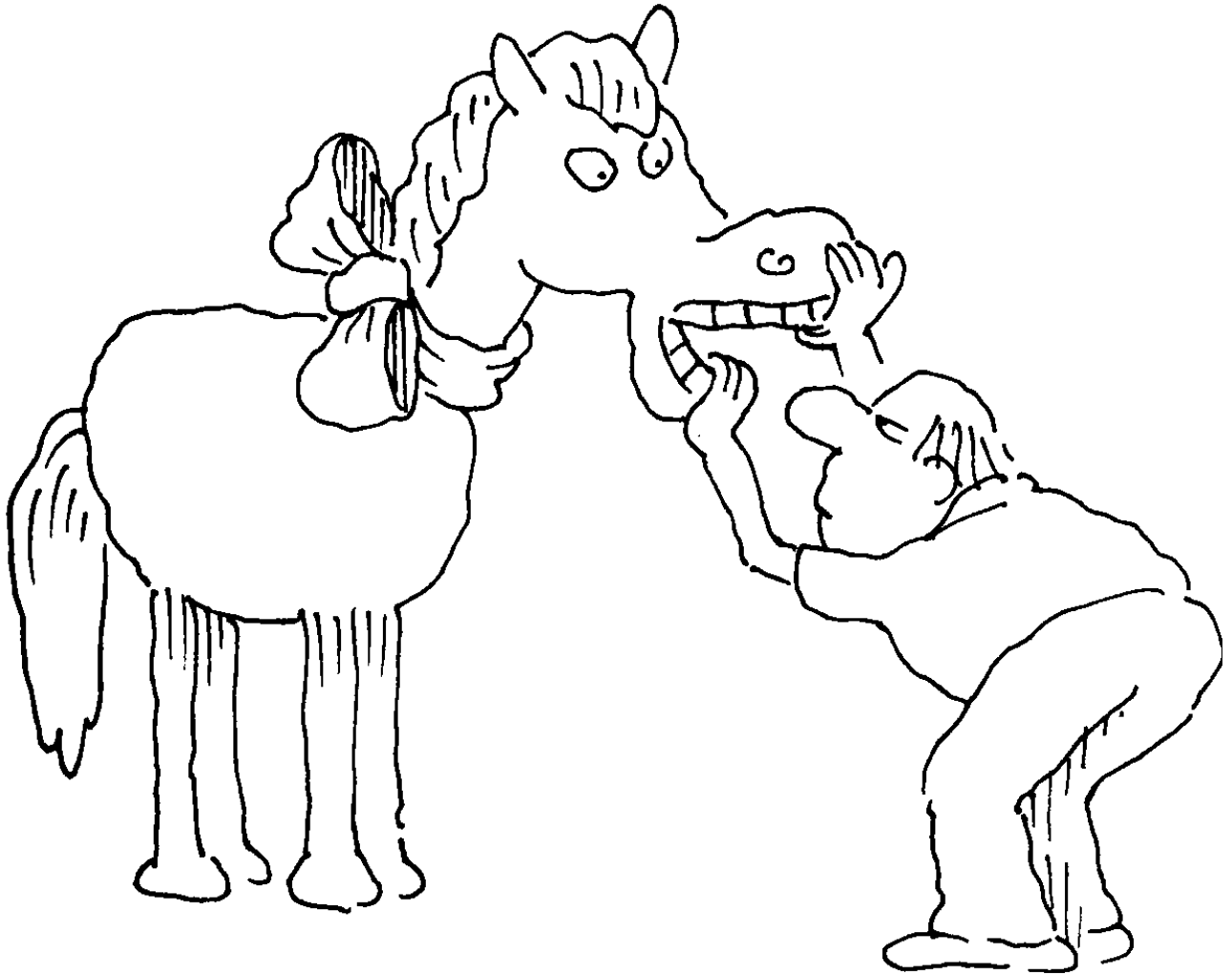
Look. **Don't judge a man until you've walked in his boots.** You've probably never tried to do the things he was doing. I'll bet you couldn't even hold your balance on those rings.

OK. Maybe **I shouldn't go around criticizing another person's performance until I've tried it myself**, but it

seemed to me that the other athletes were vastly superior.

Oh, come on now. He wasn't that bad. His maneuvers were a lot more difficult than those of his competitors.

# Don't Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth



**(don't complain about something that is  
given to you)**

How are you enjoying your car, Mike?

It's not bad. It doesn't look like much, but at least it's transportation.

Didn't your dad just give it to you outright?

Sure, but it was his old one. What I really wanted was that sleek sports car I was looking at the other day.

For gosh sakes, Mike. **Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.** If I were you, I wouldn't complain. Look at me. I'm still getting around on my bike.

I guess you're right. **I shouldn't find fault with something I got for nothing.**

Exactly! You'll have the car you want some day. Just be patient. All you have to do is get yourself a job and save money.

# Don't Put All Your Eggs in One Basket



**(don't risk losing everything at once)**

Congratulations, Jill. I hear that you came into quite an inheritance.

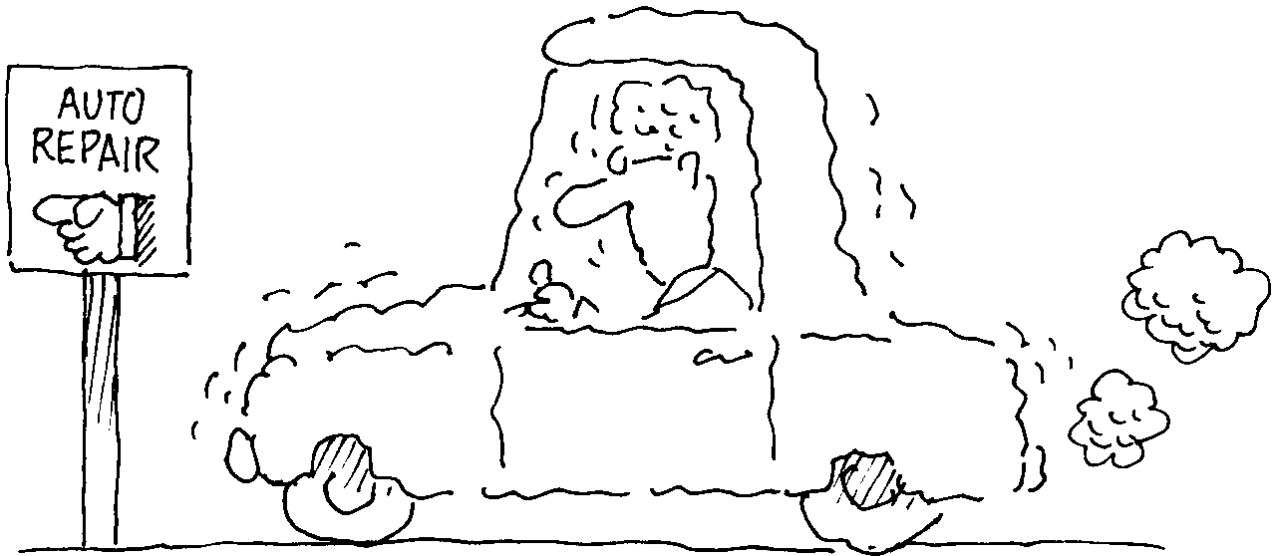
Yes, I did. My grandmother left me the bulk of her estate when she passed away. Now I'll have to start thinking of ways to invest it if I want to see it grow.

True. And remember: **don't put all your eggs in one basket.**

Never fear. **I won't risk losing my money by investing all of it in a single place.** I plan to spread out my inheritance in real estate, government bonds, and other low-risk investments. Now you're talking! If you're interested, I have the name of a good financial counselor. I'm certain that she could help you.

Thanks. As soon as I'm ready, I'll look her up.

# Don't Put Off for Tomorrow What You Can Do Today



**(don't unnecessarily postpone doing something)**

My gosh, Kathy. Why are you so late for work?

Problems with my car again. The motor kept overheating. I just barely made it here.

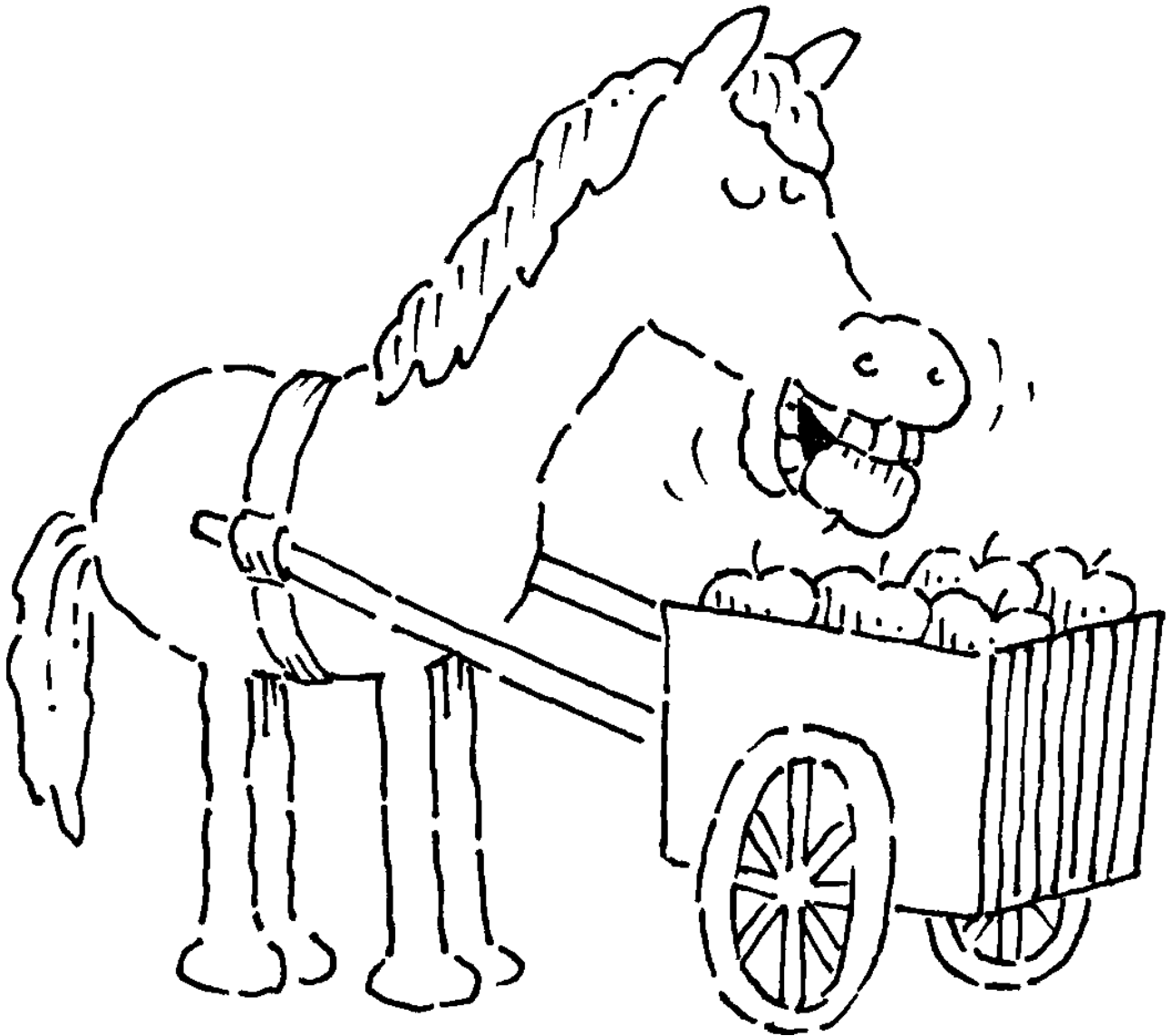
Your car has been acting up for some time now. Didn't you say you were going to have it serviced last week?

Yes, I did. But I just didn't get to it.

When will you ever learn? **Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today!**

You're right. I've got to realize that I **should not delay in taking care of something that needs to be done.** If I leave it until another time, I'll forget about it and it'll never get done.

# Don't Put the Cart before the Horse



**(don't do things in the wrong order)**

Come on, Stanley. Let's go over to the stereo shop. I'd like to buy a big screen TV set and a pair of those tower speakers while they're on sale.

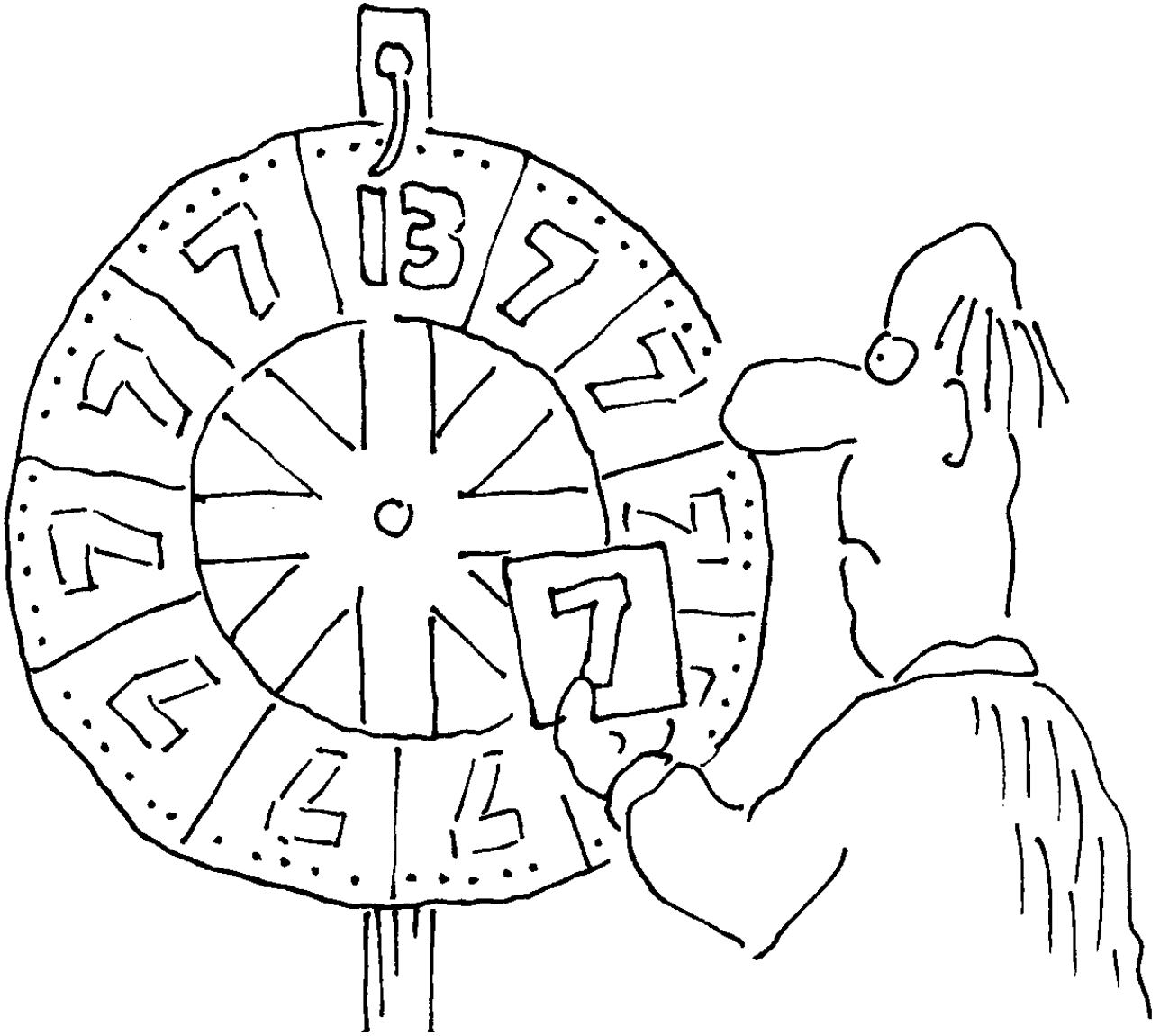
Whoa, there. **Don't put the cart before the horse!** Didn't you tell me that you were going to be cramped for space in your new apartment?

Yes, I did.

Then **don't go out and buy something that may not fit before you have all your other furniture in place.** What's more important—buying a new TV and speakers or moving in all the belongings you have already?

I guess you're right. I'd better wait until I see how much space I have.

# A Miss Is As Good As a Mile



**(losing by a narrow margin is no different than losing by a wide margin)**

Why so glum, chum?

I was just one number away from winning big on the state lottery.

At least you won something, didn't you?

Something is right. About fifty bucks. But just think, one more number and I could have won thousands!

Too bad. **But a miss is as good as a mile.**

I understand that **losing by a narrow margin is no different than losing by a wide margin.**

Still, it hurts to know that I was so close.

Yeah. Losing out by just one number is hard to take. But brighten up. Maybe you'll have better luck next time.

# The Road to Hell Is Paved with Good Intentions



**(good intentions don't always lead to good actions)**

Erik, when are you going to repair the roof? You've been talking about it for a month now.  
Andrea, I wish you wouldn't keep nagging me. I have every intention of getting to it this weekend.

Sure. **The road to hell is paved with good intentions.** How long are you going to keep putting it off?

Well, something always comes up. I should be able to start it on Saturday morning.

Let's see what happens. I won't say another word about it if you really mean what you say. I just get annoyed when **your good intentions don't lead to good actions.**

Have faith! I'll do it this weekend for sure.



# Where There's Smoke, There's Fire



**(when there is evidence of a problem, there probably is a problem)**

When the night watchman started on his routine patrol of the premises, he noticed that the door to one of the buildings was ajar. Since the building was located in a security area, he immediately jumped to the conclusion that **where there's smoke, there's fire**. The doors of all the buildings were supposed to be tightly secured after working hours, and the night watchman had been trained to think that **if there's evidence of a problem, there probably is a problem**.

## **Section Four**

# **Getting Ahead**

# The First Step Is Always the Hardest



**(the most difficult part of accomplishing something is getting started)**

Well, Adam. Did you enjoy the concert?

Yes, I did. It was quite inspiring. I sure wish I could play the violin like the concert artist who performed this evening.

There's no reason why you can't. **The first step is always the hardest.** You're still young. All you have to do is make up your mind to work at it.

Do you really think I'll ever be able to play like her?

It's hard to say at this point. But if you have enough talent and if you work hard enough, you can realize your wish. **The hardest part of learning to play like that is to start taking lessons and to learn to read music.** If you're serious about starting, I have the name of an excellent music teacher.

Wonderful. I'll give her a call the first thing tomorrow.

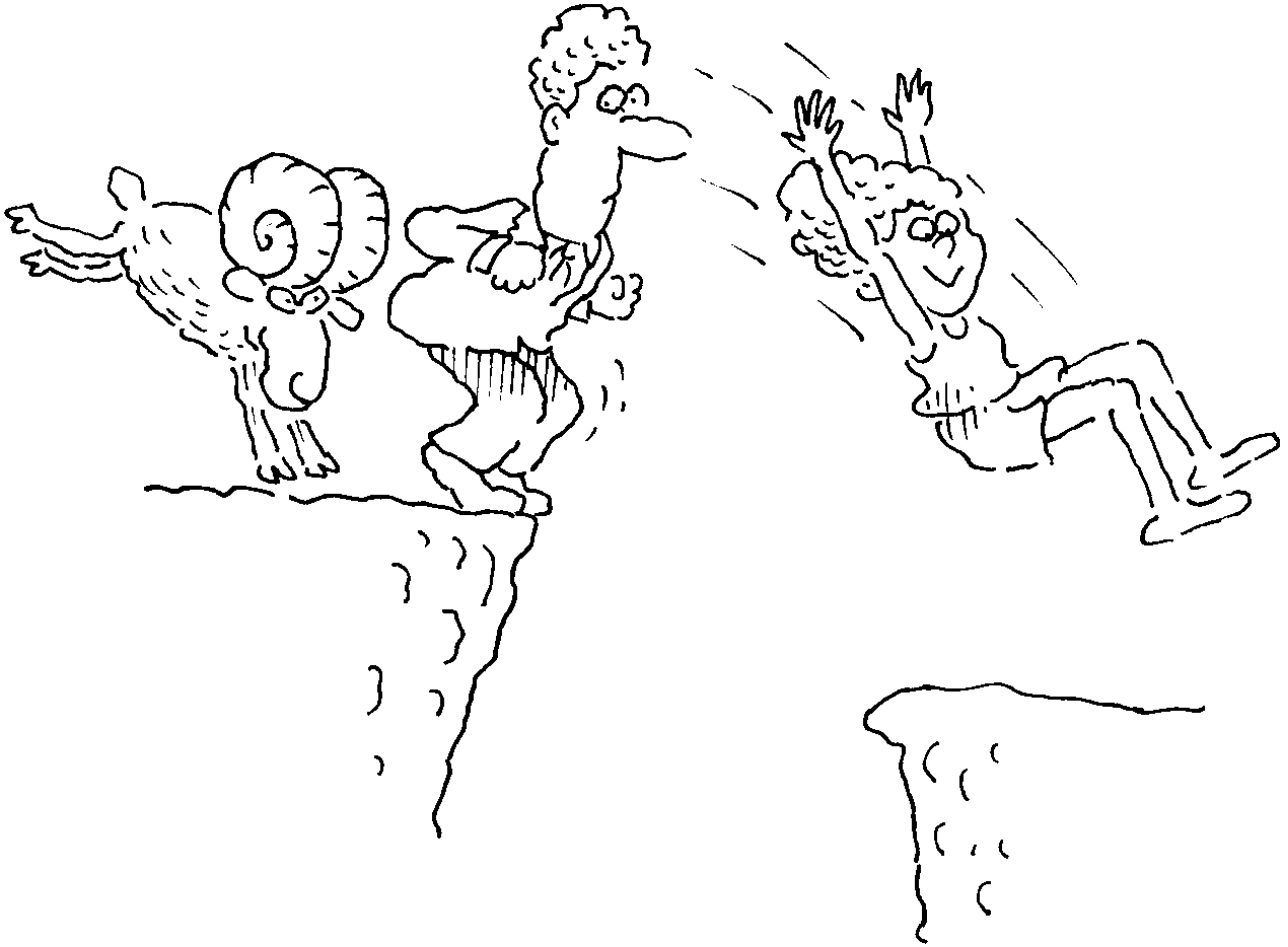
# Forewarned Is Forearmed



**(being warned about something before it happens  
allows a person to prepare for it)**

When it became known that a hurricane was due to hit the coast within twenty-four hours, the local authorities **alerted the inhabitants and outlined a series of precautionary measures for coping with the storm.** Their goal was to avoid having people harmed by the devastating force of the winds and rain. The authorities rightly believed that **forewarned is forearmed.**

# He Who Hesitates Is Lost



**(a person who doesn't act decisively is unlikely to succeed)**

If you want to buy that new car you've been looking at, you'd better hurry up.  
Why?

Don't you read the papers? Next month the state sales tax is going up a whole cent. That will add up to a lot of money on a car! **He who hesitates is lost.**

I've been holding off because the dealer told me there would soon be a factory-authorized rebate on the car I want. But I see your point. **If I delay in purchasing the car, I may never get another chance to buy it at the current price.** Maybe I'd better not wait for the factory rebate—especially if it comes through after the new taxes go into effect.

Wise decision. Get hopping!

# No Pain, No Gain



**(nothing can be accomplished without effort)**

Is Chiqui off practicing again?

Yes, that's all she does. She's up at four in the morning, and by five she's already at the ice rink. She puts in two full hours of practice before going to school. Then after school, she practices for another three hours with her partner.

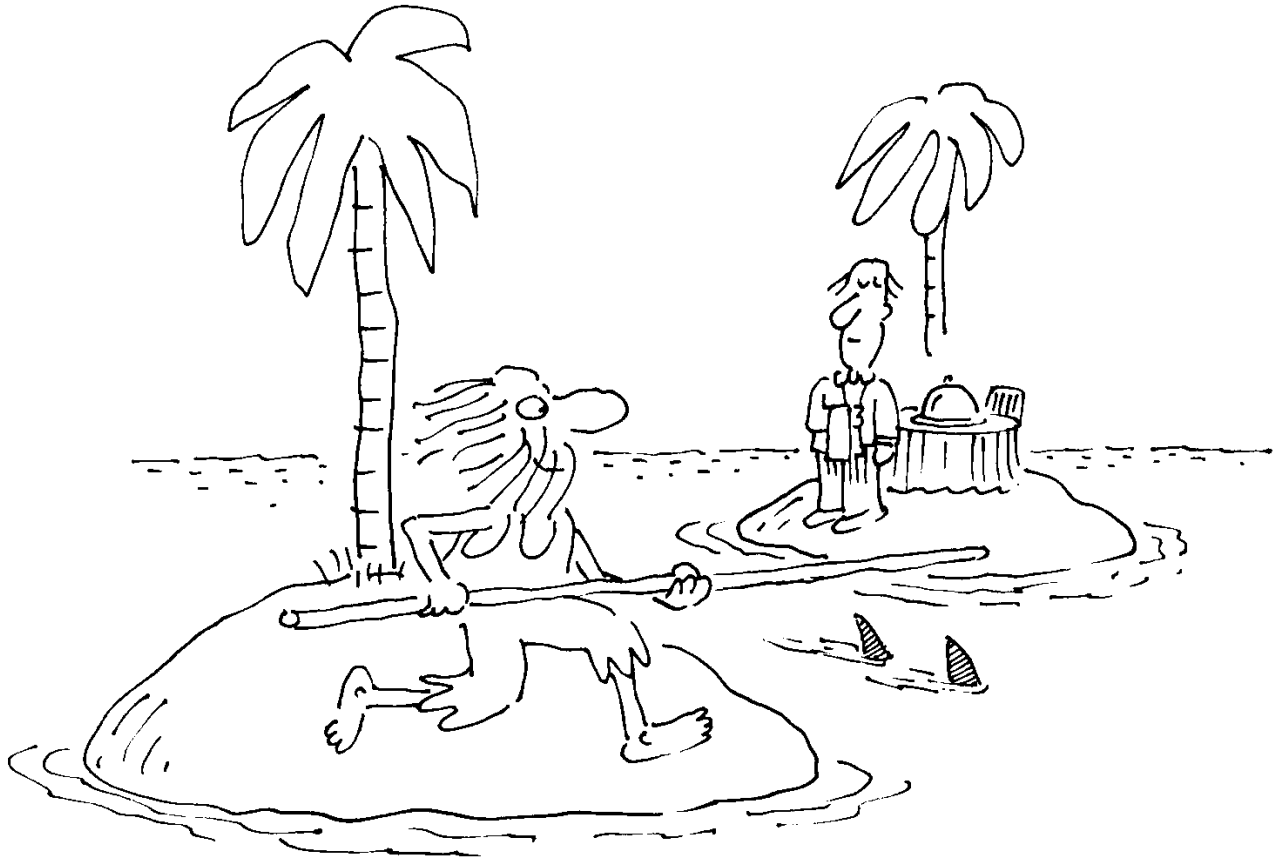
That's a crushing routine. How does she do it?

**No pain, no gain.** She wants to be a champion ice skater, so she's working hard to perfect her technique and skills.

At this rate she'll make it by the time she's out of high school.

Maybe even sooner. She is one determined young lady. She knows that **without great effort and discipline she'll never achieve her goal.**

# Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained



**(you can't achieve anything if you don't try)**

For years Tanya dreamed of participating in the ice-skating competitions in the Olympics. When tryouts for the team were announced, Tanya doubted that she could qualify, but she thought: **nothing ventured, nothing gained.** After all, she knew that **if she didn't at least try to make the team, she would never realize her ambition.** It's a good thing she didn't let fear or uncertainty keep her from trying out. She did brilliantly and made the team, then won a silver medal for her country.

# The Pen Is Mightier Than the Sword



**(the written word is more powerful than physical force)**

It's true! **The pen is mightier than the sword!** I just got a letter from the president of the corporation that made my car. I've been having trouble with the alignment and the steering column almost from the day I bought it.

Did you take it back to the dealer?

I sure did, but he kept claiming that everything seemed OK. I got so angry that I almost came to blows with the guy, but I decided against force and instead I wrote a letter to the president of the company. As you can see, he wrote back and not only did he apologize for the way I was treated, he offered to let me trade in the car for a brand new one at no additional cost!

Congratulations! You've proved that **the written word is more powerful than physical force.**



# Practice Makes Perfect



**(doing something many times improves one's skill at it)**

You're now typing thirty words per minute. Good for you. That's a big improvement.

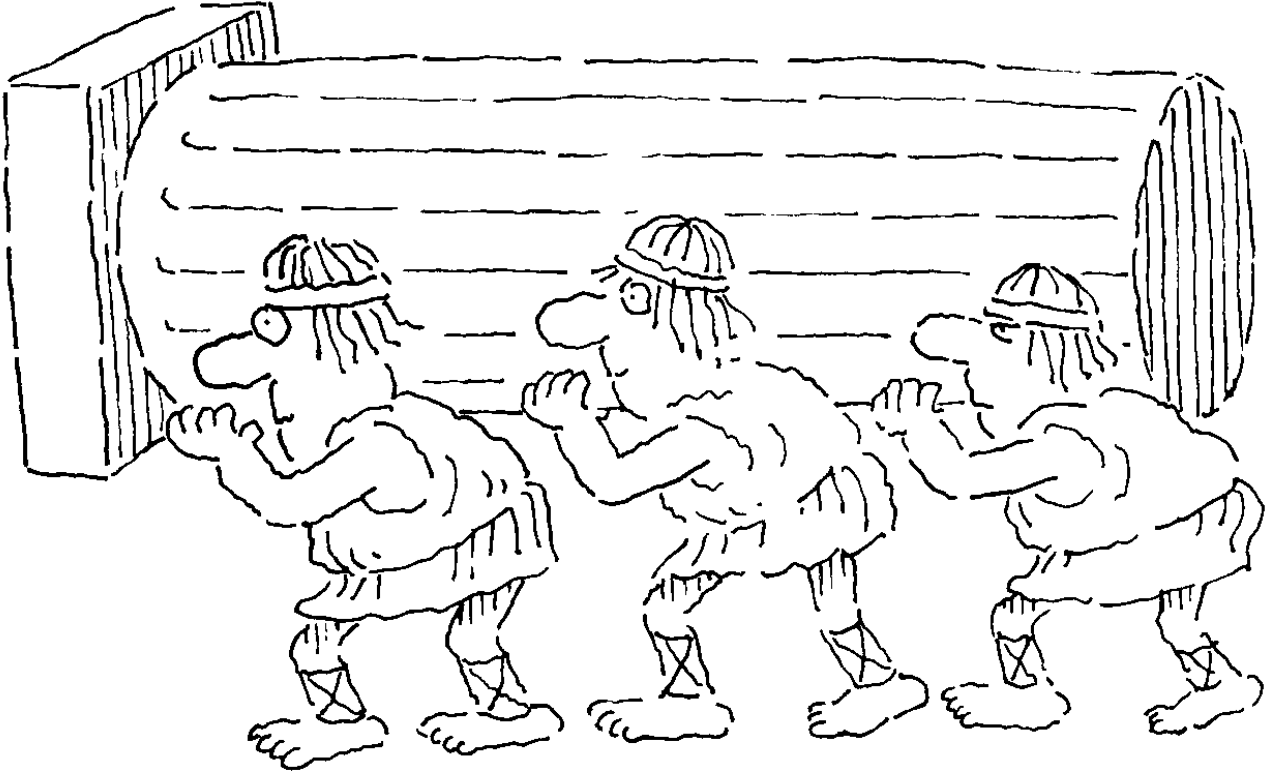
Thank you. If only I could stop making mistakes on those numbers!

That's something you'll have to work on, but **practice makes perfect**. Eventually you'll be able to type the numbers just as accurately as you do the letters.

Now that you mention it, I have been concentrating more on the letters. I think I'll focus my practice on the numbers for a while. **With constant drill and repetition I should be able to type them perfectly.**

You'll increase your typing speed and proficiency, too. Just keep practicing. You can only get better!

# Rome Wasn't Built in a Day



**(important things do not happen overnight)**

Hi, Judy. How's your word processing class coming along?

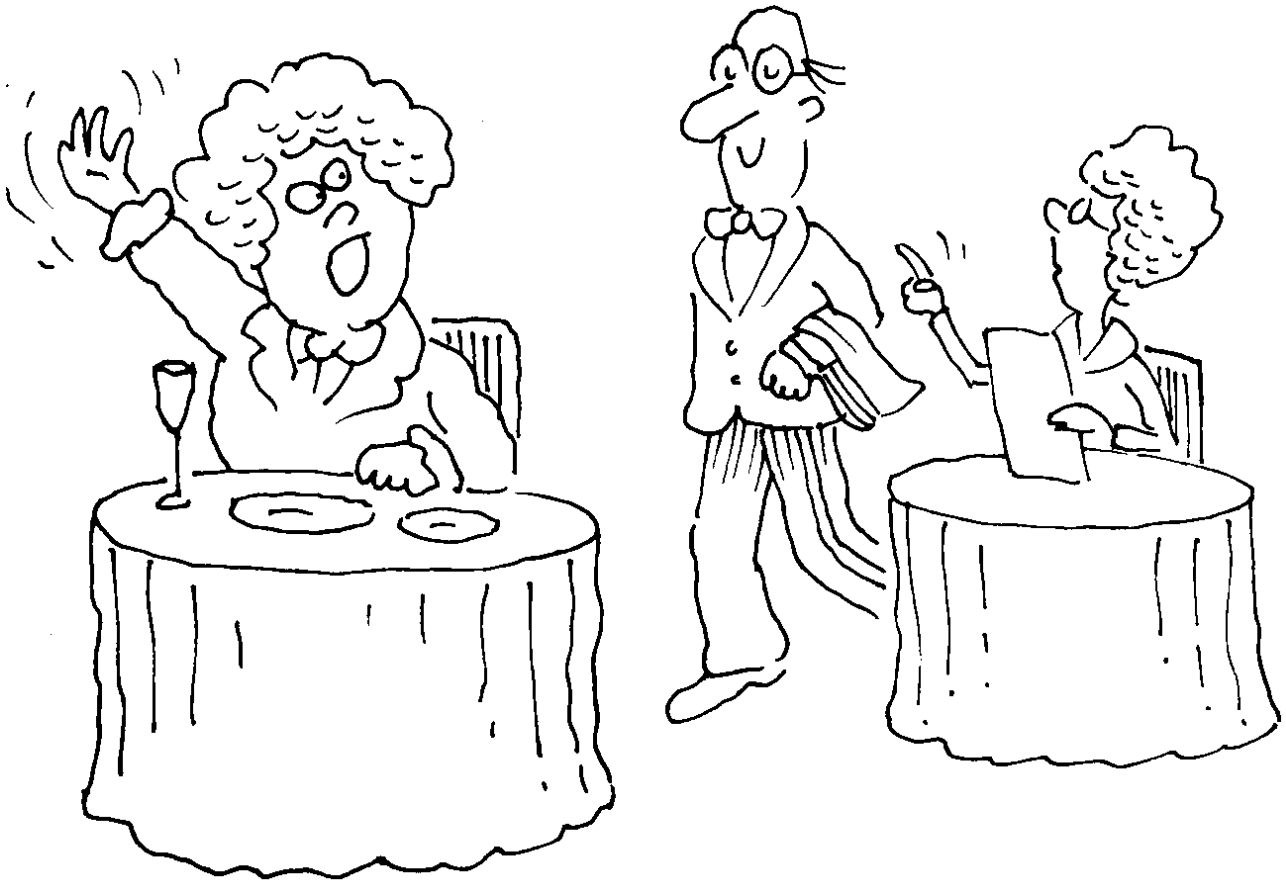
Well, so far progress has been rather slow. I haven't learned the keyboard yet, and I have problems remembering all the commands for editing. I get really impatient because I want to master the technique as soon as possible.

Just remember that **Rome wasn't built in a day**. Word processing can be a complicated procedure.

You're right. Our teacher keeps telling us that it takes time to learn all the aspects of word processing and that **we can't master everything in one day**.

That's absolutely true. But you'll catch on. Just be patient and practice whenever you can.

# The Squeaking Wheel Gets the Oil



**(those who complain the loudest get the most attention)**

Hi, Ian. What have you been up to?

Not much. Actually, I've been thinking of moving.

Why's that?

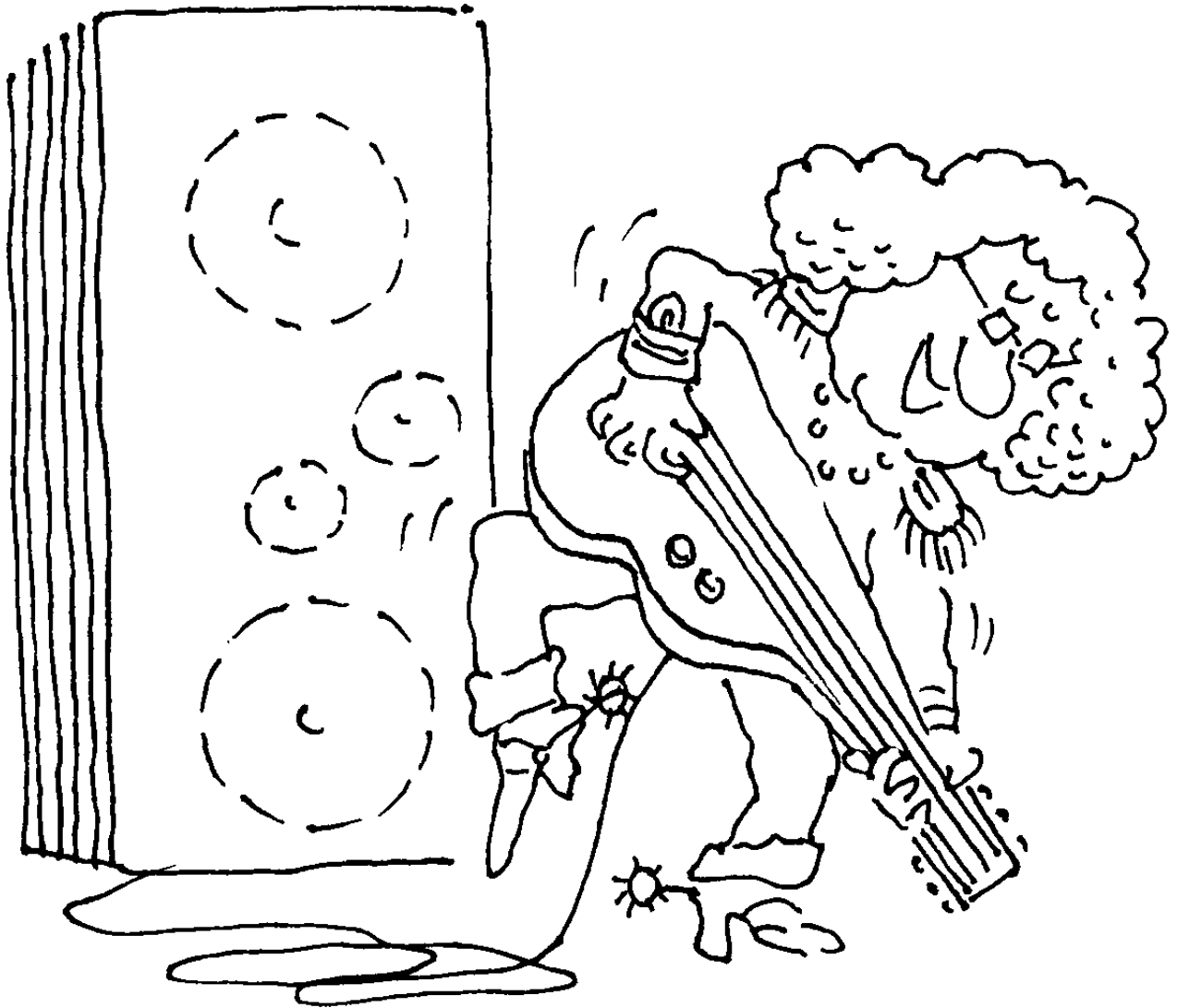
My apartment is a mess. The paint is chipping. There's a leak in the ceiling and the linoleum in the kitchen is cracked. What annoys me the most is that all the other apartments in the building have been completely renovated, except mine.

For heaven's sake! Haven't you learned that **the squeaking wheel gets the oil?**

Well, I've mentioned the problems to the building manager, but so far nothing has been done.

Maybe you haven't stated your complaints forcefully enough. Remember, **those who complain the loudest get the most attention.**

# You're Never Too Old to Learn



**(a person can learn at any age)**

Chinese! What are you doing studying Chinese?

I've always wanted to learn it, but I never got around to it before. All those years I was so involved with business that there was never any time. Now that I'm retired, I thought I'd give it a shot. I figure **you're never too old to learn.**

More power to you. I've been thinking of going back to school myself, but I'm getting up in years and I didn't know if I was too old to learn.

Listen, my friend. **A person can learn at any age.** You can do it if you want to badly enough. Just stick with it.

I appreciate your words of encouragement. Maybe I will take that class in real estate, after all.

## **Section Five**

# **It Never Works**

# Beggars Can't Be Choosers



**(when a person has nothing, he or she must accept whatever help is offered)**

What's up, Jennifer? I heard you were in a little accident the other day.

Yeah. This guy bumped into the back of my car when I stopped at an intersection.

Was there much damage to your car?

Well, enough that I had to leave it at a body shop for several days.

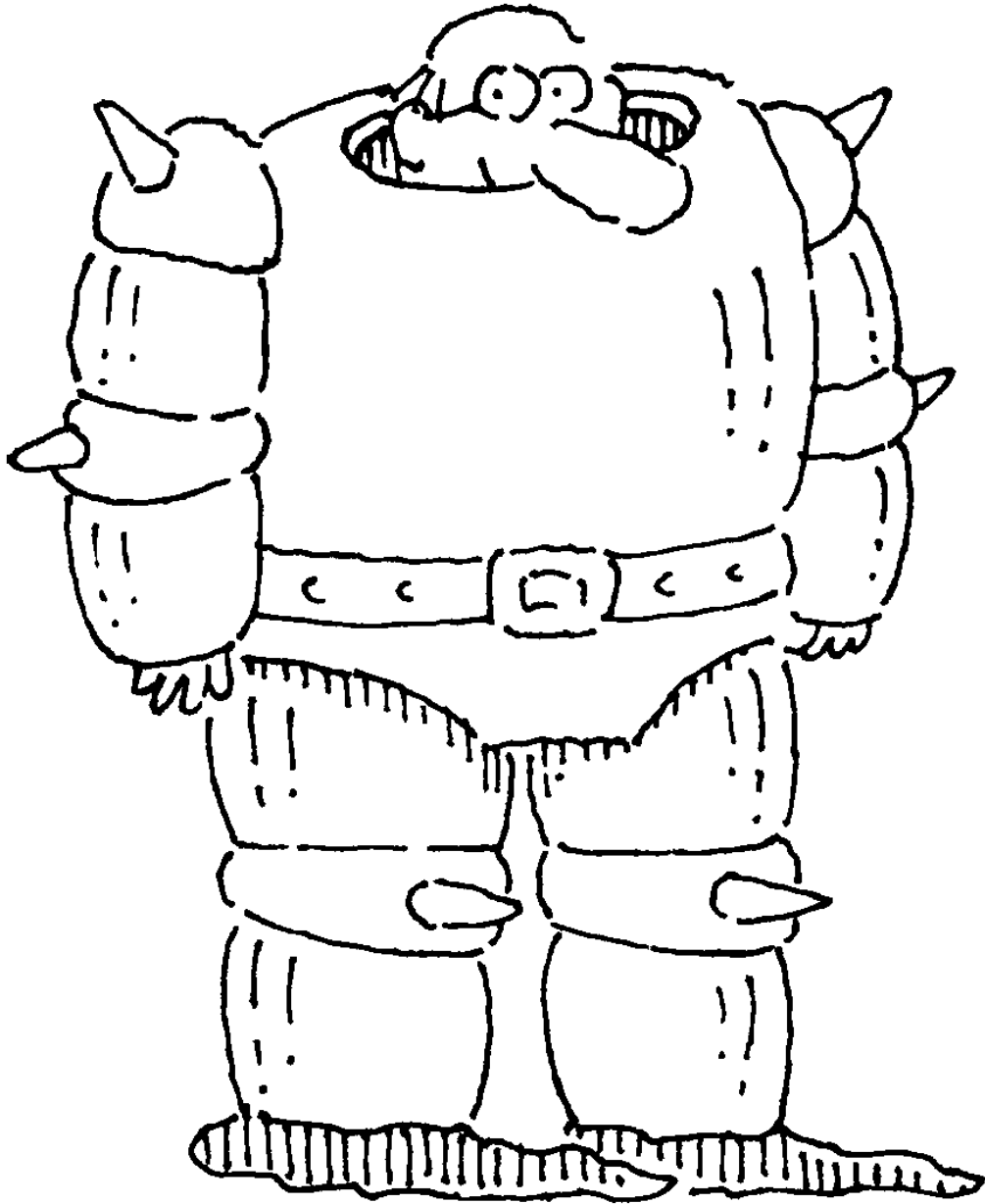
How did you get around?

The shop gave me a "loaner," but it ran very poorly.

For heaven's sake! Why did you accept it?

**Beggars can't be choosers.** I needed another car until mine was repaired, so I had to accept whatever the shop offered me.

# Clothes Do Not Make the Man



**(a person should not be judged by the clothes he or she wears)**

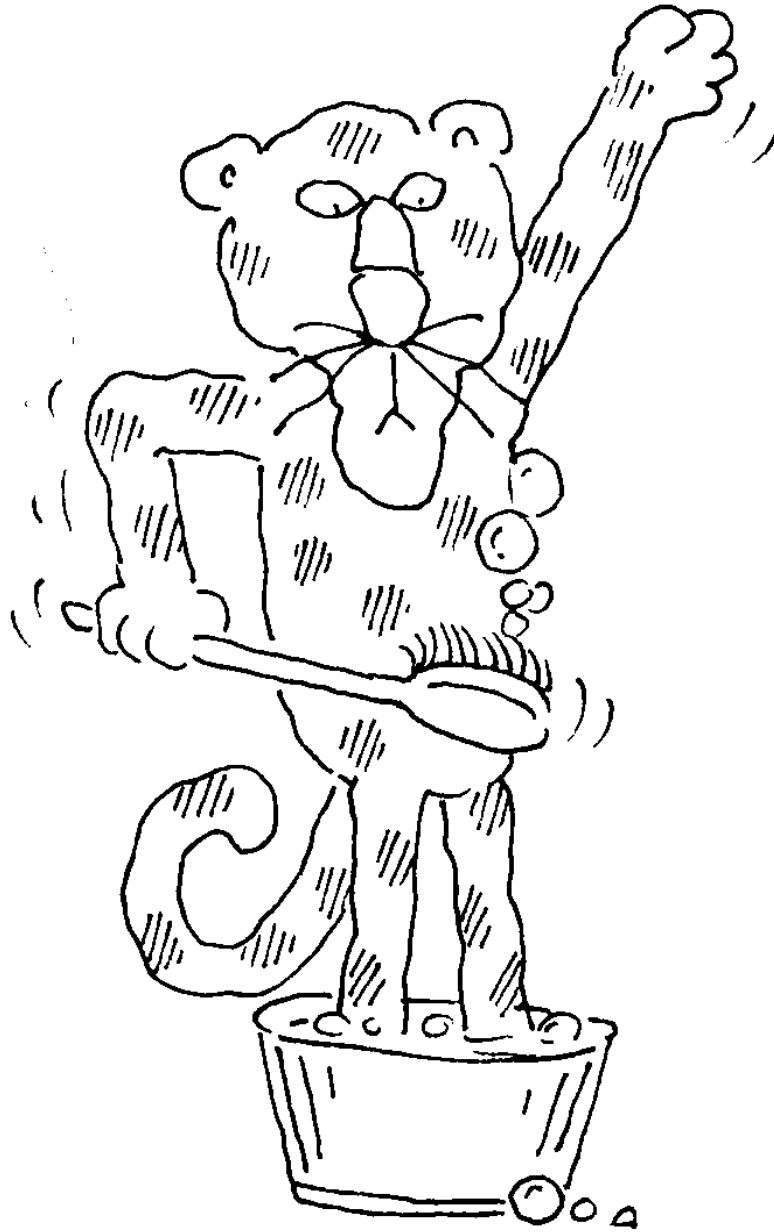
I saw Howard the other day in a costume store. He was renting a suit of armor for a costume ball. Sally's going to be there, and he thinks she might agree to go out with him if he projects a more manly image.

He must be dreaming! Doesn't he know that **clothes do not make the man?**

He's convinced that Sally has always refused his invitations because of his puny appearance. Evidently he doesn't realize that **she's not going to judge his character by observing the clothes he's wearing.**

You said it! A suit of armor won't change his appearance or his personality. Still, I wish him luck.

# A Leopard Cannot Change His Spots



**(a person cannot change his or her basic character once it has been formed)**

Pat, I'm at my wits' end. I don't know what to do about having Stephen clean up his room. Didn't he promise to tidy it up this afternoon?

He did. And look at it. It's still a mess! I can't and won't keep picking up after him.

It looks like **a leopard cannot change his spots**. No matter what we do, he won't keep his room in order.

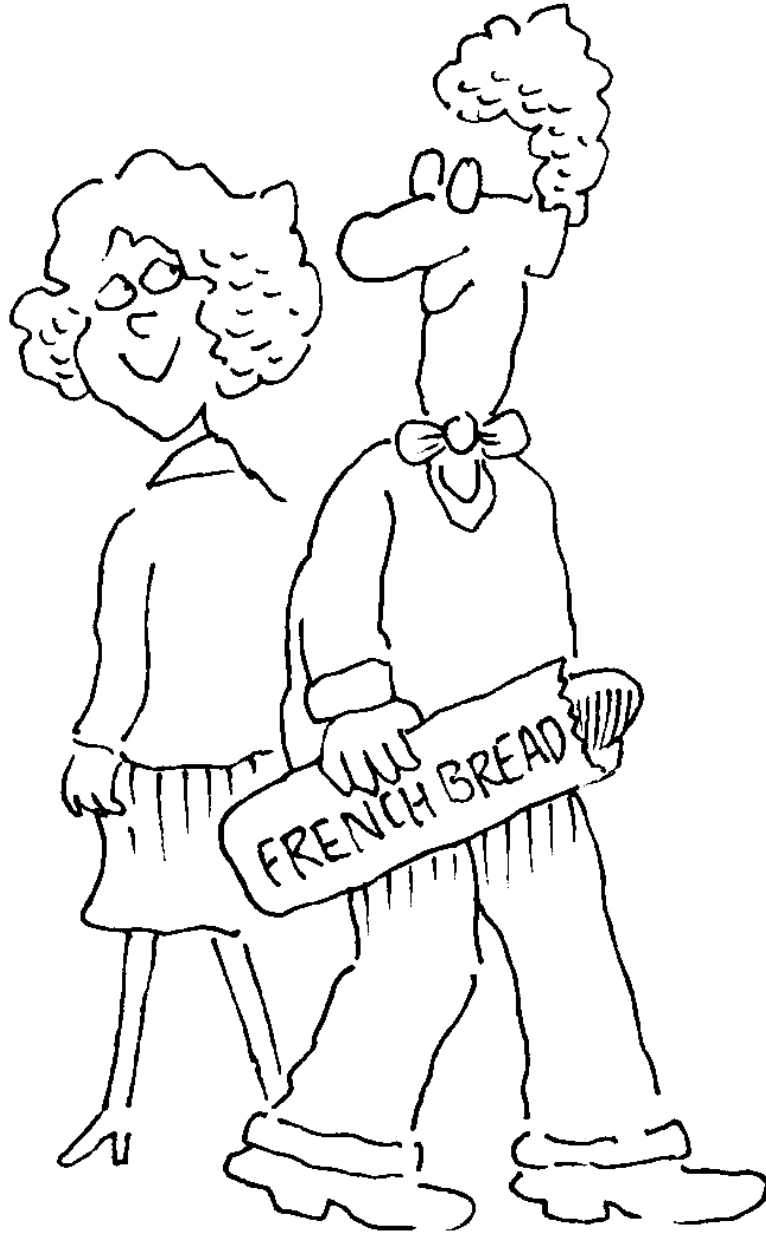
Please don't expect me to believe that **his habits are already formed and he can't change them**. He's too young for that.

OK. I'll have a talk with him and see what I can do.

Good luck. But I bet you won't get to first base with him.



# Man Does Not Live by Bread Alone



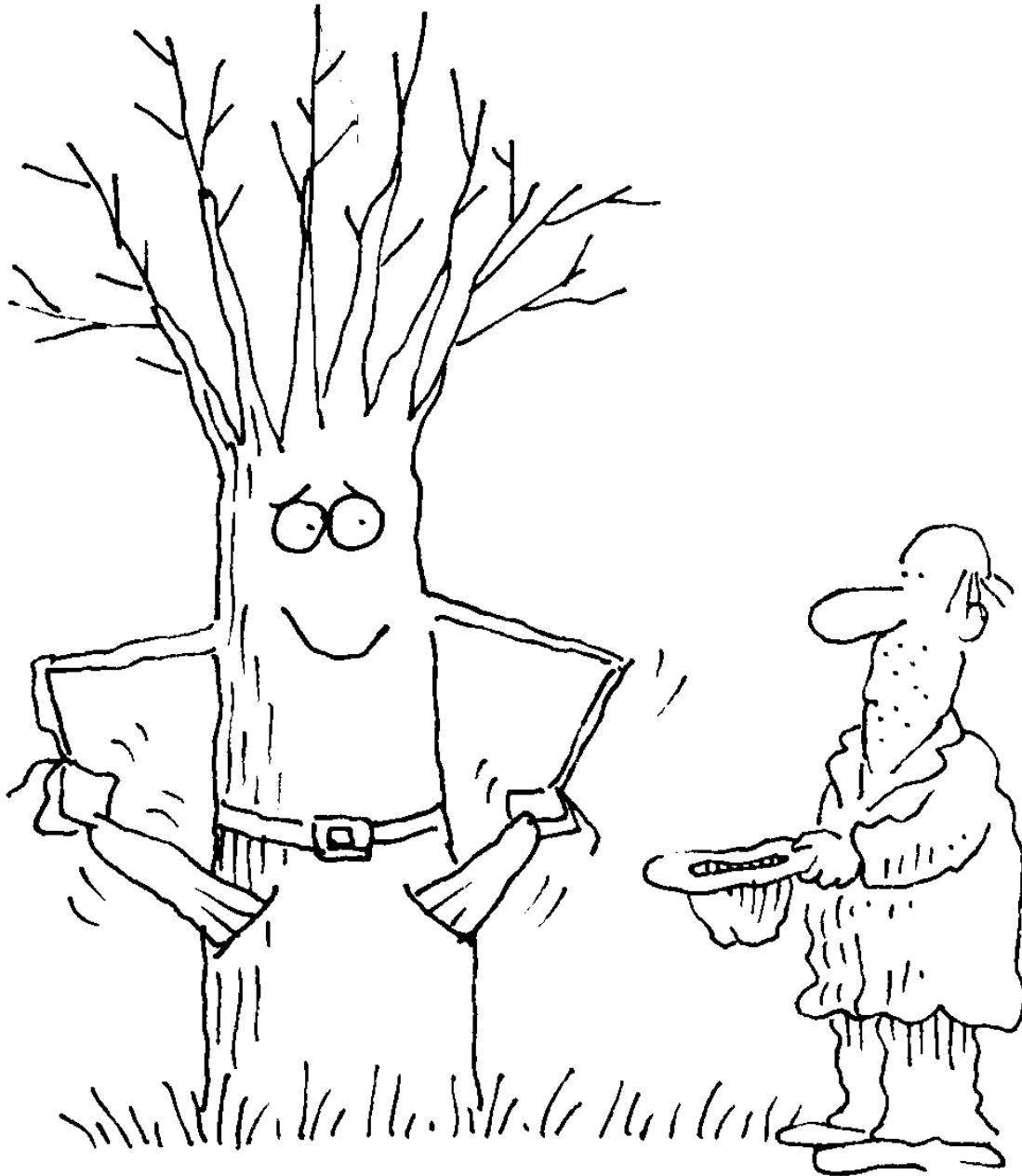
**(people's psychological needs as well as their physical needs must be satisfied if they are to live)**

Holy cow, Petel! Don't you think about anything but food? After all, **man does not live by bread alone.**

Look! Don't go around thinking that all I care about is food. I know that **there's more to life than eating.** After all, who but me is doing twenty hours a week of volunteer work at the community center? And who do you suppose spends his weekends as a big brother for underprivileged children?

I've never doubted your dedication to helping others. I just think your dedication to food might be somewhat exaggerated. All that extra weight you're carrying around isn't doing your heart any good.

# Money Does Not Grow on Trees



**(money is not easily obtained)**

I can't wait to show you the fabric I found for the drapes in the living room and dining room. I saw the perfect carpeting for the family room, too. Now we just need to pick out some furniture. Hold it! We just paid a hefty sum of money for the down payment on the house. The landscaping also cost a bundle. We'll have to take it easy for a while. After all, **money does not grow on trees.**

I know that **money is not easy to come by**, but where will we sit if we have no furniture?

What's wrong with our old furniture?

It won't match the new carpeting and drapes!

Then we'll just have to sit on the floor.

# One Swallow Does Not a Summer Make



**(one piece of evidence is not enough to prove something)**

Hey, Rebecca. How was your tennis match the other day?

Great! I beat out Garcia and made the final play-offs. I've got the championship in the bag!

Hold on, there. I can understand your excitement, but remember that **one swallow does not a summer make**. The final outcome won't be known until the last game is played.

You're right. I know I shouldn't **form my opinion based on a single victory**, but I've got a good feeling about this tournament.

More power to you. I hope you don't end up by being disappointed.

# Too Many Chiefs, Not Enough Indians



**(too many people are giving orders, and not enough people are following orders)**

What's going on here? I told you guys to get these trucks loaded and have them ready to roll out two hours ago! Why is the job only half done?

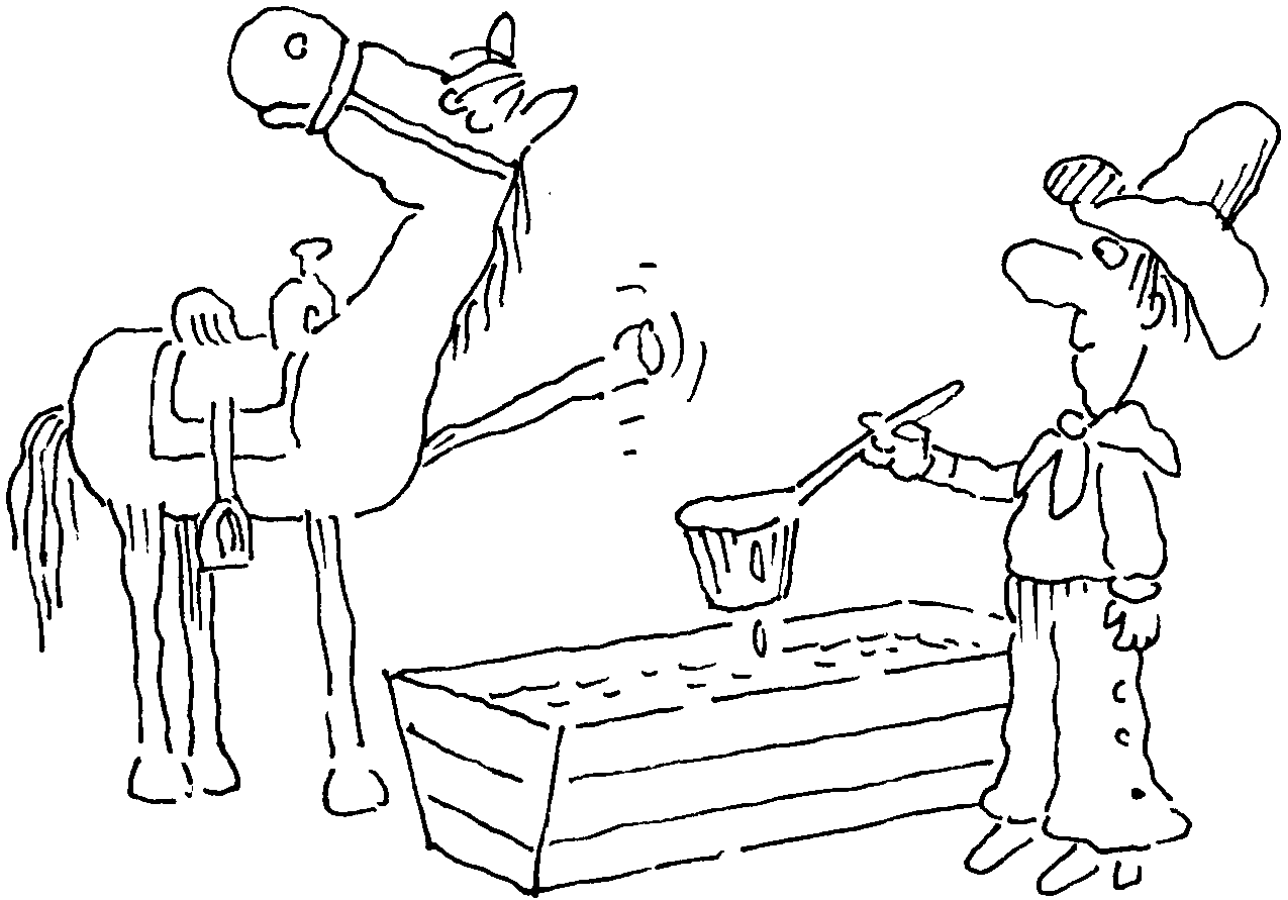
Well, boss, the trouble is that you weren't around, and **everybody had his own idea on how the job should be done. Since nobody would listen to anyone else, we couldn't do the job.**

Oh, I see. **Too many chiefs, not enough Indians.**

You've got it!

OK. Let's get it together. From now on I'll be giving the orders and you guys will be following through. If everybody keeps trying to run the show, nothing will ever get done.

# You Can Lead a Horse to Water, but You Can't Make Him Drink



**(you can propose a course of action to someone, but  
you can't force that person to accept it)**

Did you enjoy your dinner at that new French restaurant last night?

I sure did, but Larry might as well not have come. I ordered the house special and both the waiter and I recommended that Larry do the same, but he ended up ordering what he could have had in any coffee shop—a cheeseburger and fries! Imagine that!

Well, you know what they say: **you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.**

If I remember correctly, Larry has always stuck to American cuisine.

That's true. And I realize that **you can suggest to another person what he should do, but you can't make him take your advice.** I guess I'll just have to keep Larry away from continental cuisine until he's ready to try something new.

# You Can't Have Your Cake and Eat It Too



**(you can't enjoy the advantages of two conflicting activities at once)**

Are we going to see you at Bill's place tonight?

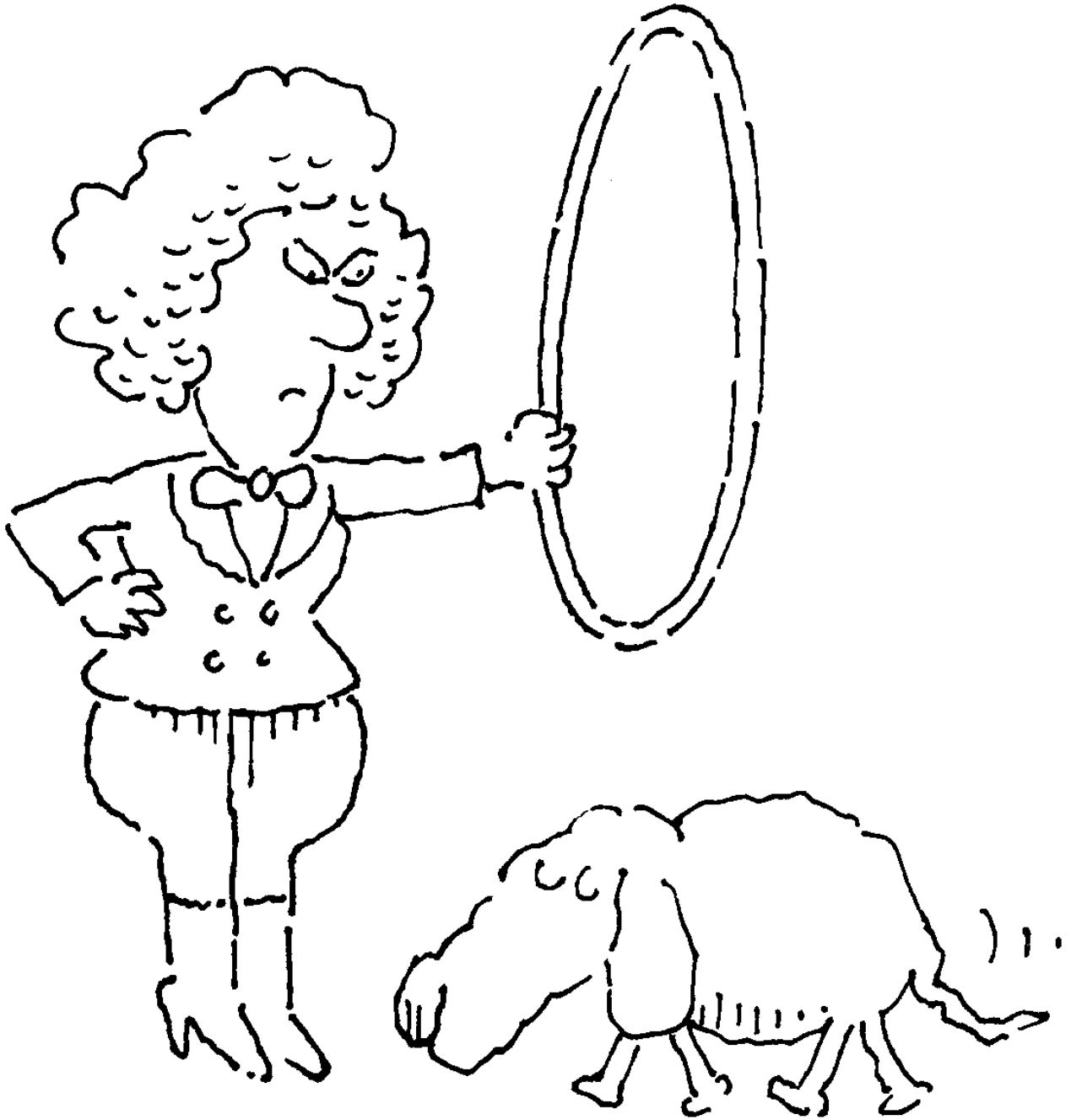
I don't think I'll be able to make it. I've been getting a little static from my wife about our weekly "boy's night out." She's getting tired of being left alone every Friday night. We had a bit of a tiff, and she came right out and told me: **"You can't have your cake and eat it too!"**

Gee, that's too bad. You'll be missed.

And I'll miss seeing you guys. But she's right. Now that I'm married **I can't keep enjoying the advantages of bachelorhood without jeopardizing my relationship with my wife.**

I understand, and I'll let the other guys know. But don't hesitate to drop in any time you happen to be free in the future. You'll always be welcome.

# You Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks



**(elderly people can't change their behavior or learn anything new)**

To many of his friends, Mr. Jones seemed quite eccentric. Although he was getting on in years, he had a longstanding habit of going out alone to walk in a shoddy part of town late at night. His friends warned him that this was a dangerous practice, and they advised him to do his walking during the day. However, he made no effort to change his routine. It was evident that **you can't teach an old dog new tricks**. Even his closest friends had to accept the fact that **it's almost impossible for an elderly person to adopt a new routine**.

## **Section Six**

# **It's Human Nature**



# The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree



**(children take after their parents)**

Well, Mr. West, this rash is nothing serious. Just apply this ointment, and it should be gone in a few days.

Thanks, doctor. By the way, how is your son doing?

Great! He's in his second year of medical school, and doing quite well.

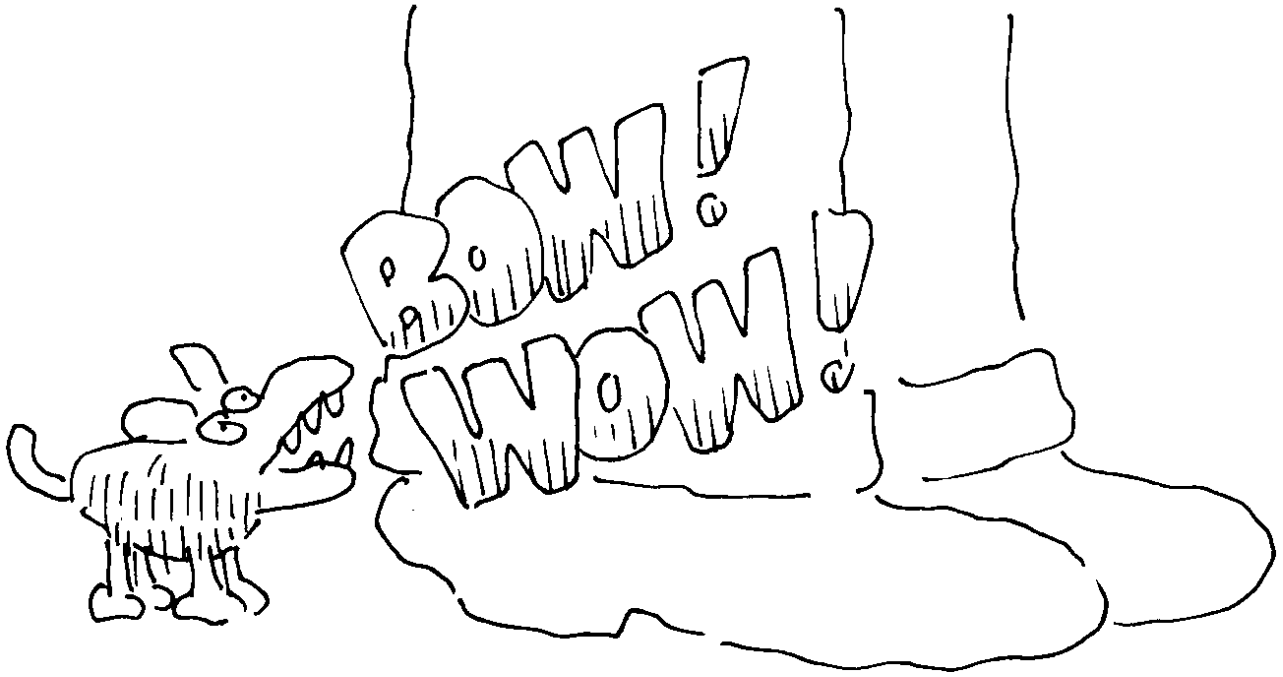
**Ah! The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.**

So it seems. Actually, I'm very proud of him. He says that he wants to specialize in heart surgery.

That's ambitious. I'm sure you're pleased that **your son is following in your footsteps by going into medicine.**

Yes, that makes me happy. He should make a fine surgeon.

# Barking Dogs Seldom Bite



**(people who threaten others usually do not hurt them)**

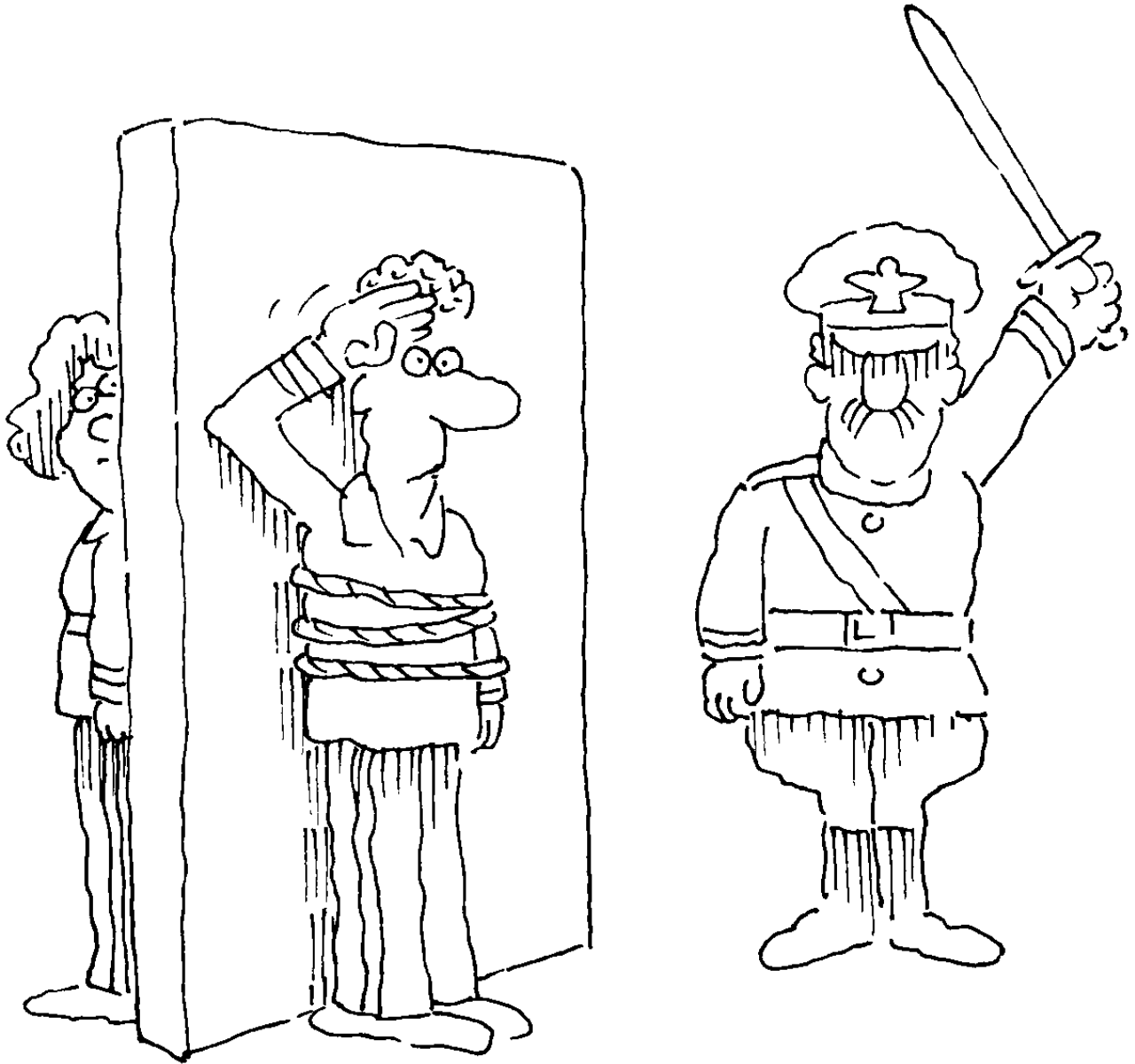
Hi, Frank. What are you doing back in class today? I thought Mr. Tucker kicked you out yesterday for misbehaving.

He did. But you know that **barking dogs seldom bite**. I've had Mr. Tucker for other classes, so I know that he never stays angry for long. **He has threatened to punish other students before, but he has seldom followed through.** Actually, he's a very forgiving person.

So how did you get him to let you back in?

I went to his office after class and apologized for causing such a ruckus. I gave him my word that it would never happen again. Sure enough, he accepted my apology, and here I am!

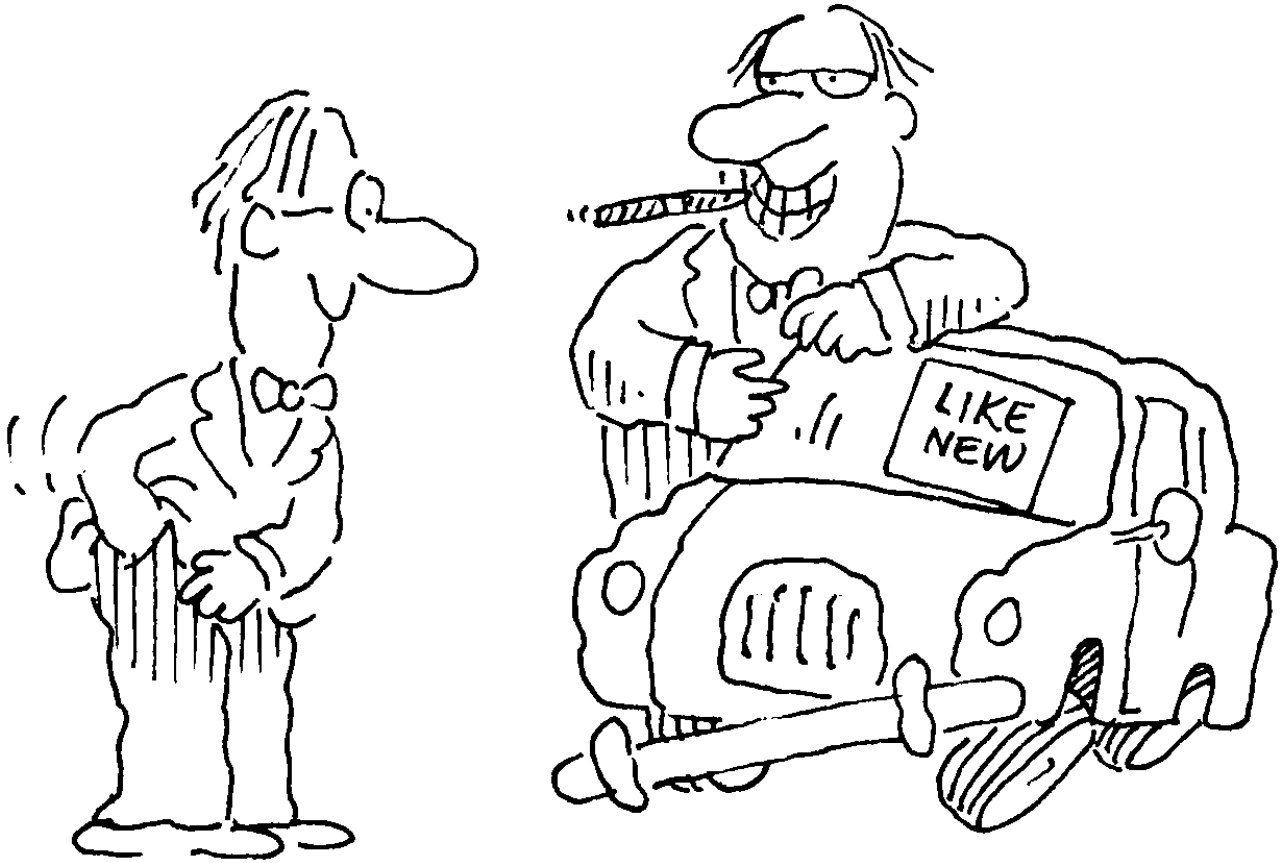
# Better a Live Coward Than a Dead Hero



**(it's better to run from a life-threatening situation  
than to fight and risk being killed)**

Mathieu had made a career of the army, and over the years he had seen battle numerous times. He had never distinguished himself in any particular way, but he had managed to come out alive from some truly life-threatening situations. His basic philosophy had always been: **better a live coward than a dead hero**. Frankly, that's how he managed to stay alive. He was no hero, and he didn't want to be. **He preferred to run from danger rather than die in an act of bravery.**

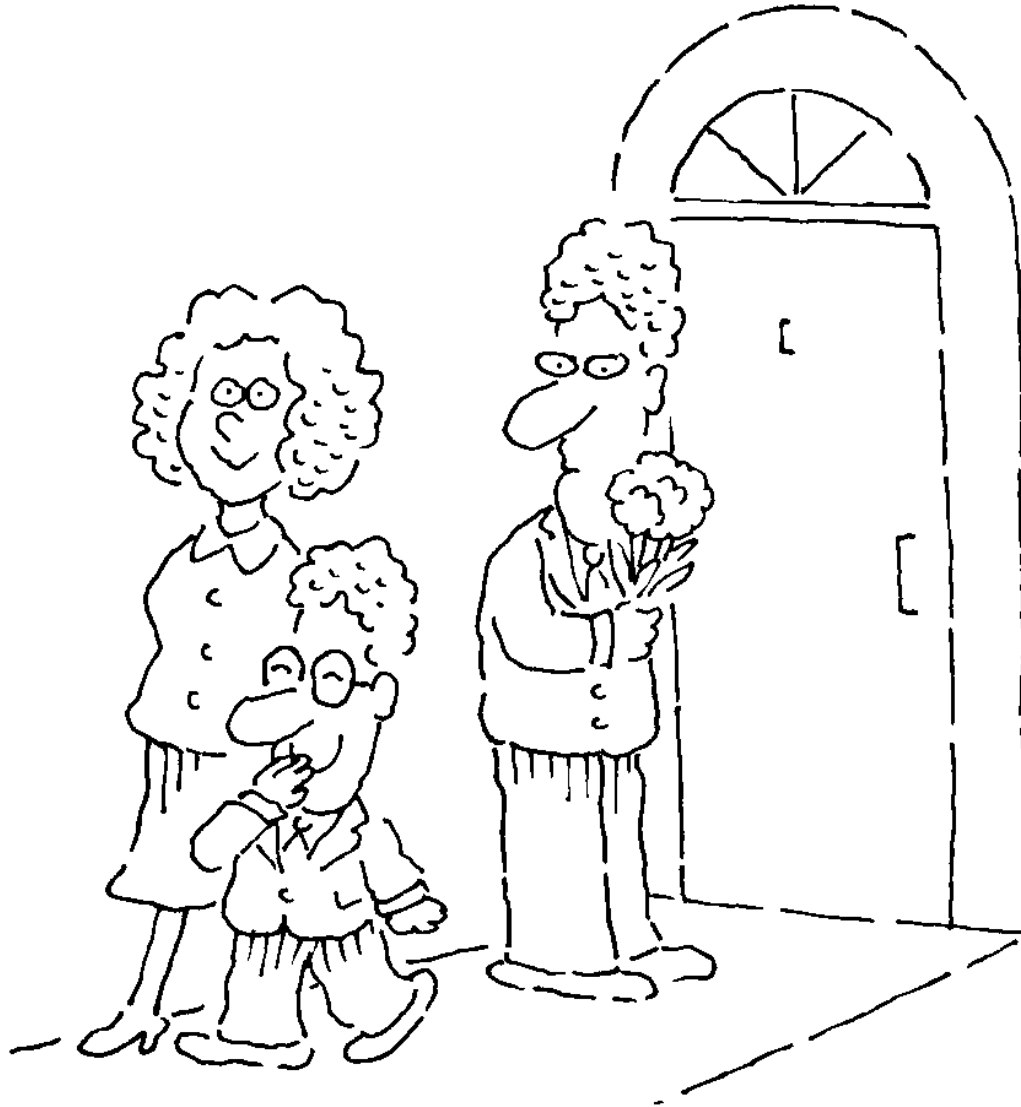
# A Fool and His Money Are Soon Parted



**(a foolish person quickly spends his or her money on worthless things)**

Rick had always thrown caution to the winds when it came to money. He would often spend his money carelessly on things he really didn't need. When he won a large sum of money in the lottery, he was very excited. However, **a fool and his money are soon parted**. First Rick went on a shopping spree, and then he invited some friends to spend the weekend at a fancy, expensive resort. It was not long before he went through every cent he had won. **He foolishly spent his winnings on worthless and unnecessary things**, and soon he had nothing left. How easy it would have been to put some of the money away for a rainy day.

# He Who Laughs Last, Laughs Best



**(the person who succeeds in making the last move  
has the most fun)**

I still can't believe it! Sue Carlson, the homecoming queen, was Caleb's date at the prom last night.

That is one for the books! She's one of the most beautiful girls in school. I thought for sure she would be going with Al, the captain of the football team. Caleb is such a bookworm. What does she see in him?

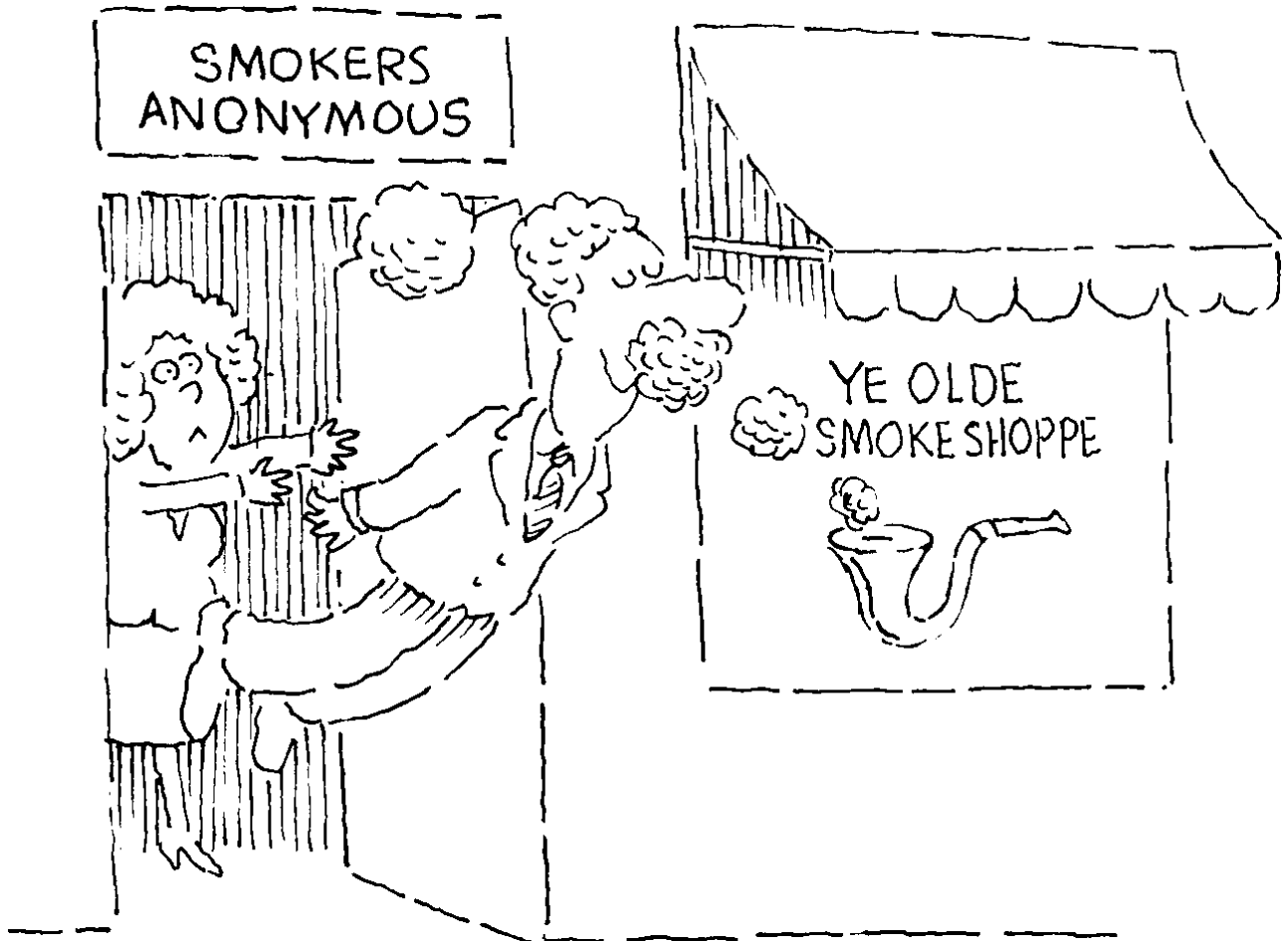
Evidently Al was taking Sue for granted and assumed she would go to the prom with him without his even asking her. Caleb wooed her with compliments and a book of love poems, so she agreed to go with him. When Al found out, he hit the ceiling!

It just goes to show you that **he who laughs last, laughs best.**

Who would have ever believed it? Al has always been so cocky.

Yes, but **Caleb really came out on top in this situation and won the lasting victory.**

# Old Habits Die Hard



**(it is very difficult to change an established pattern of behavior)**

When I ran into Neil the other day he was coughing up a storm. Is he OK?

Who knows? He's as OK as he'll ever be.

I don't get you.

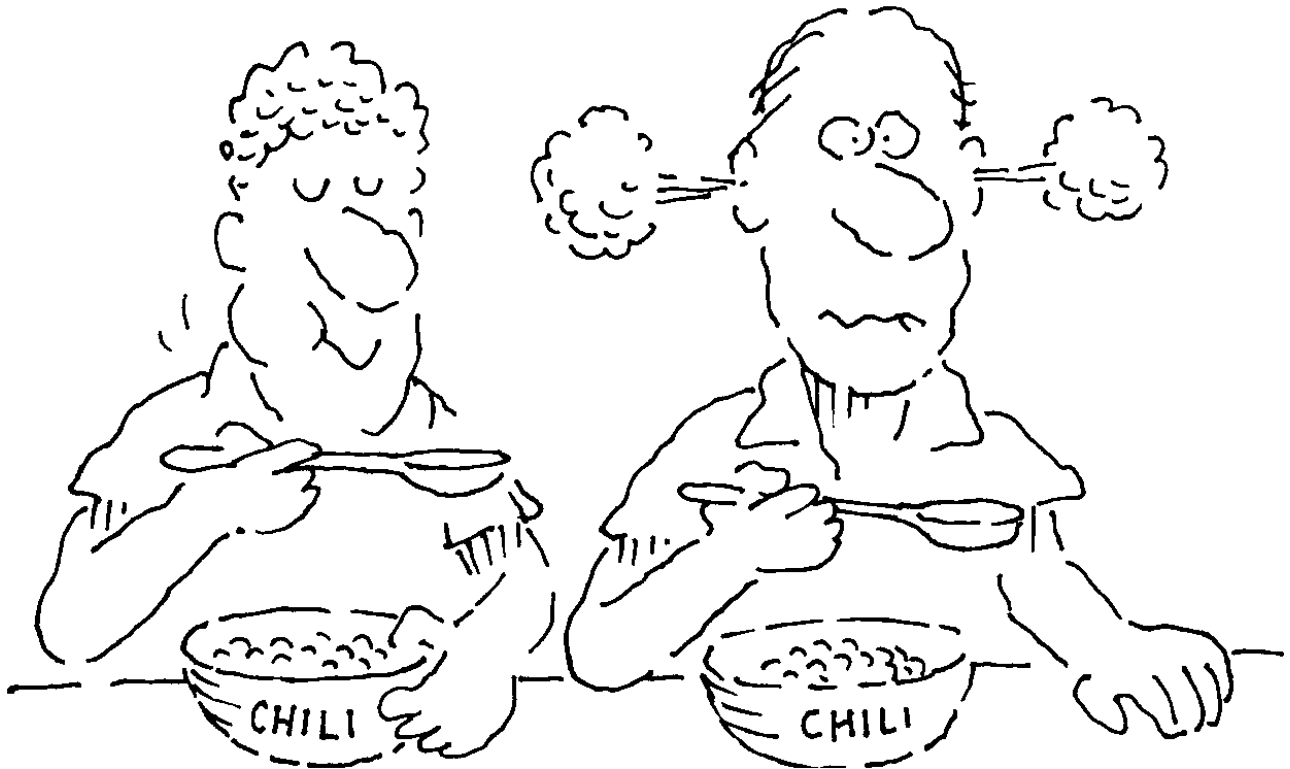
He's taken up smoking again. You know he had quit for about a year, but I guess **old habits die hard**. The doctor even warned him that he would have health problems if he continued to smoke.

What made him start again?

As I said, **it's very difficult to change a set habit**. He was doing quite well until he had some personal problems. He must have started smoking again to alleviate the strain of dealing with them.

That's too bad. His health is bound to suffer.

# One Man's Gravy Is Another Man's Poison



**(what is pleasing to one person may not be pleasing to another)**

Elaine, we haven't been out for a while. Why don't we take in the symphony tomorrow night?  
Charles, you know I've never been able to sit through an entire concert of classical music. How about going to hear that new rock group at Danny's instead?

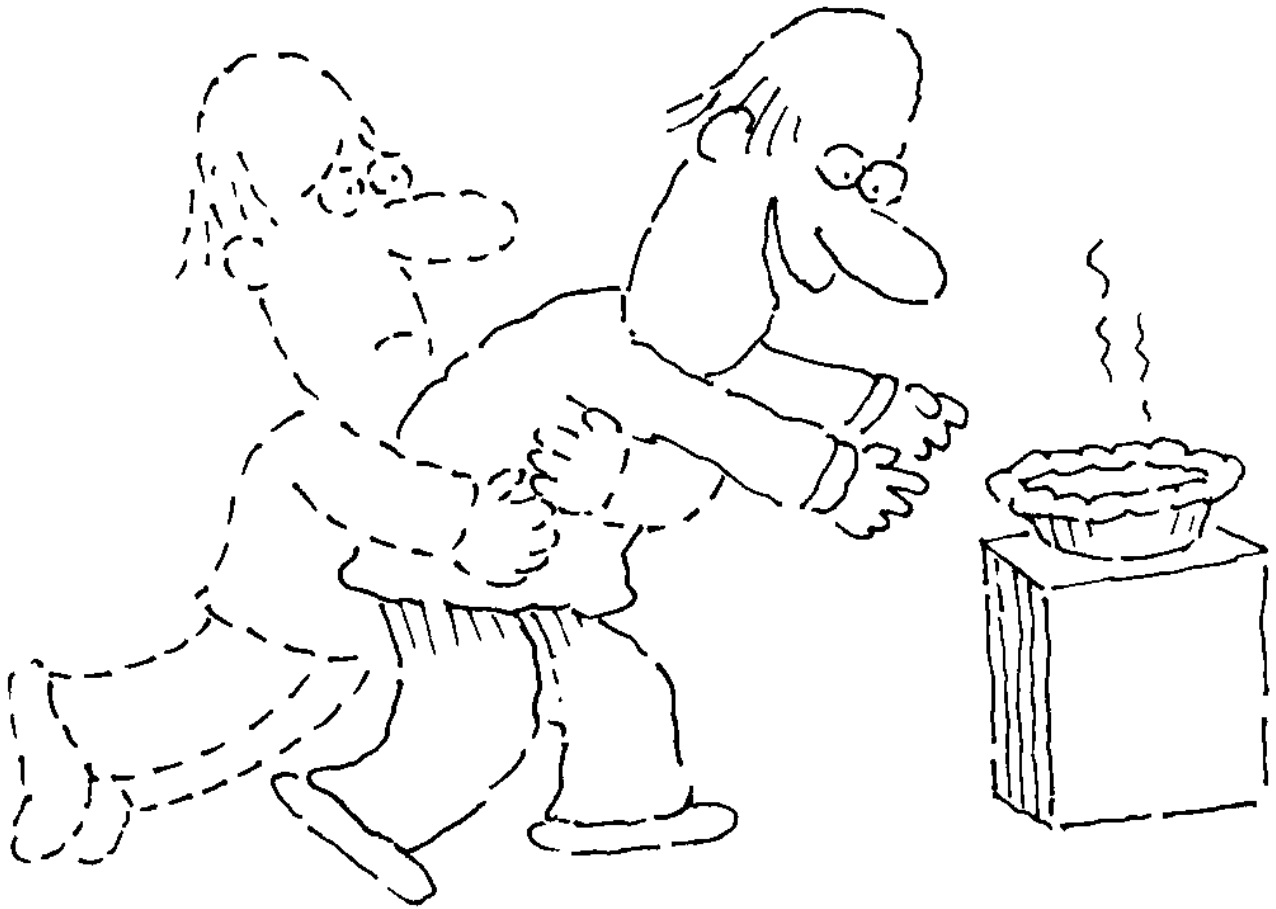
And get my ears blown off? No way!

It just goes to show you that **one man's gravy is another man's poison.**

Well, I realize that **what pleases one person may not please someone else.** But let's compromise. Come to the symphony concert tomorrow night, and on Saturday I'll take you to hear that rock group. Is it a deal?

OK. I'll even get you a set of ear plugs so you won't go deaf.

# The Spirit Is Willing, but the Flesh Is Weak



**(a person's body is not always as strong as his or her mind)**

Greetings, Elena. Where have you been keeping yourself lately?

Hi, Paula. Actually, I've been working out at the gym and doing aerobic dance.

It really shows! What prompted you to go in for all this exercise?

I had my yearly checkup, and Dr. Mena told me that I had to lose twenty pounds.

So he put you on a diet, right?

He sure did! But I couldn't stay with it. I would lose five or six pounds, and then I'd put the weight right back on again. The truth is I can't keep away from food.

**I see. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

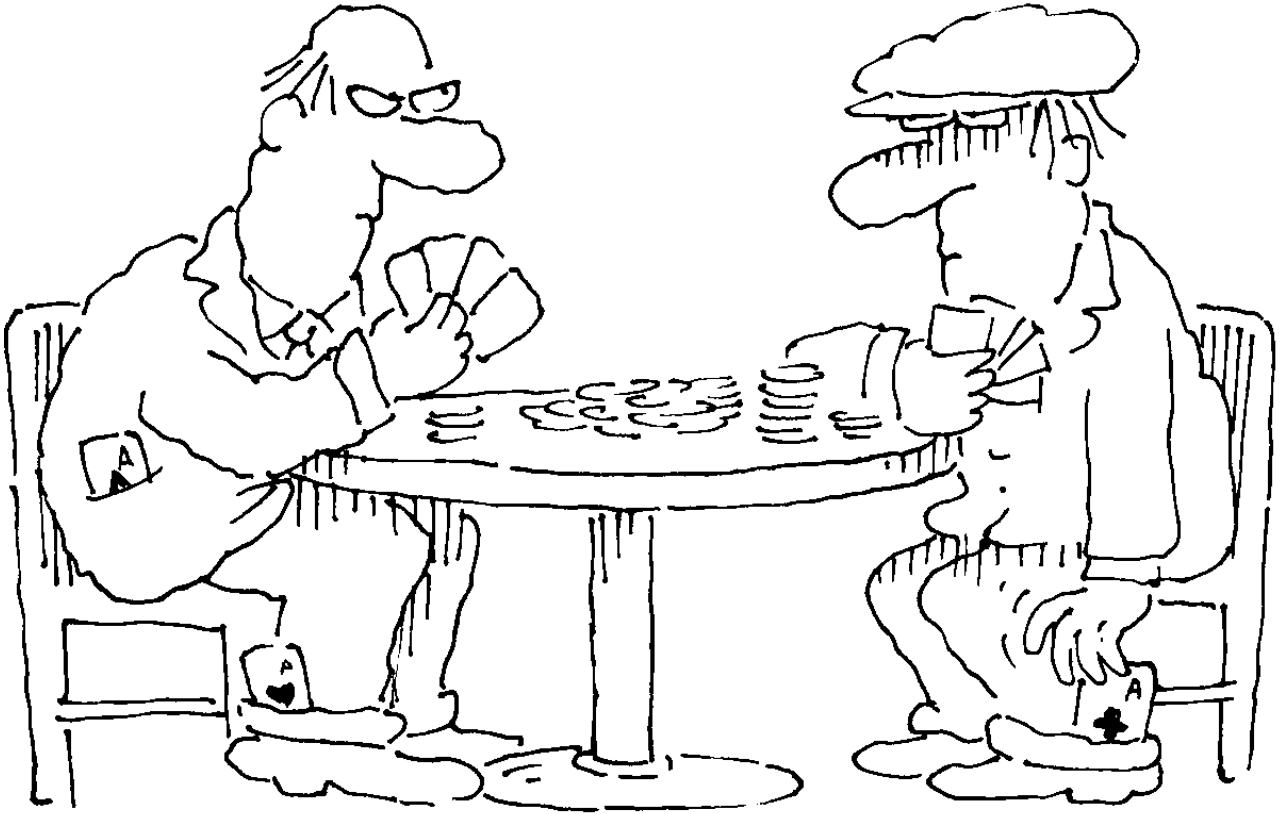
Absolutely right! **I want to lose the weight, but I don't have the willpower to ignore those gnawing pangs of hunger.** Since I love to eat, I decided to exercise in addition to trying to diet.

That way I can burn off any extra calories.

You're obviously succeeding. I've never seen you look better.



# There Is No Honor among Thieves



**(one dishonest person cannot trust another)**

After the bank robbery, the members of the gang decided to split up and go in different directions in order to avoid getting picked up by the police. The leader of the gang said that he would hold all the money and distribute it to the other members after pressure from the authorities had died down. All the robbers agreed and went their separate ways. Needless to say, none of them ever received his share of the money. They should have known better, for **there is no honor among thieves**. In time, all the gang members were caught and sentenced to long prison terms. There they remained, fully aware of the fact that **one dishonest person cannot trust another**.

# There's More Than One Way to Skin a Cat



**(there are many ways to achieve a goal)**

Meinhard, what answer did you get for that equation?

I came out with forty-five.

So did I! Could I see how you arrived at your answer?

Sure. Be my guest.

Let's take a look. I used different calculations in steps two and three.

It doesn't matter. We both got the same answer, didn't we?

We sure did!

**See. There's more than one way to skin a cat.**

That's what counts. It just goes to show you that **the same goal can be achieved in more than one way**. Math certainly is no exception.

# There's No Fool like an Old Fool



**(a foolish act seems even more foolish when performed by an older person, who should have a lot of wisdom)**

Did you hear about Henry? He's gotten married again.

I can't believe it! At his age? This is his third time, isn't it?

Yeah. **There's no fool like an old fool.** You'd think he would have learned when his first two marriages ended in disaster. I honestly don't see how this one can last, either.

What makes you think that?

Henry's job. It requires long hours and keeps him away from home six months out of the year. It seems that ol' Henry hasn't learned anything from his previous relationships. He's already got two strikes against him—his age and his job. And **there's nothing more ridiculous than the foolish behavior of a person who should have learned something from his previous experiences.**

# Variety Is the Spice of Life



**(differences and changes make life enjoyable)**

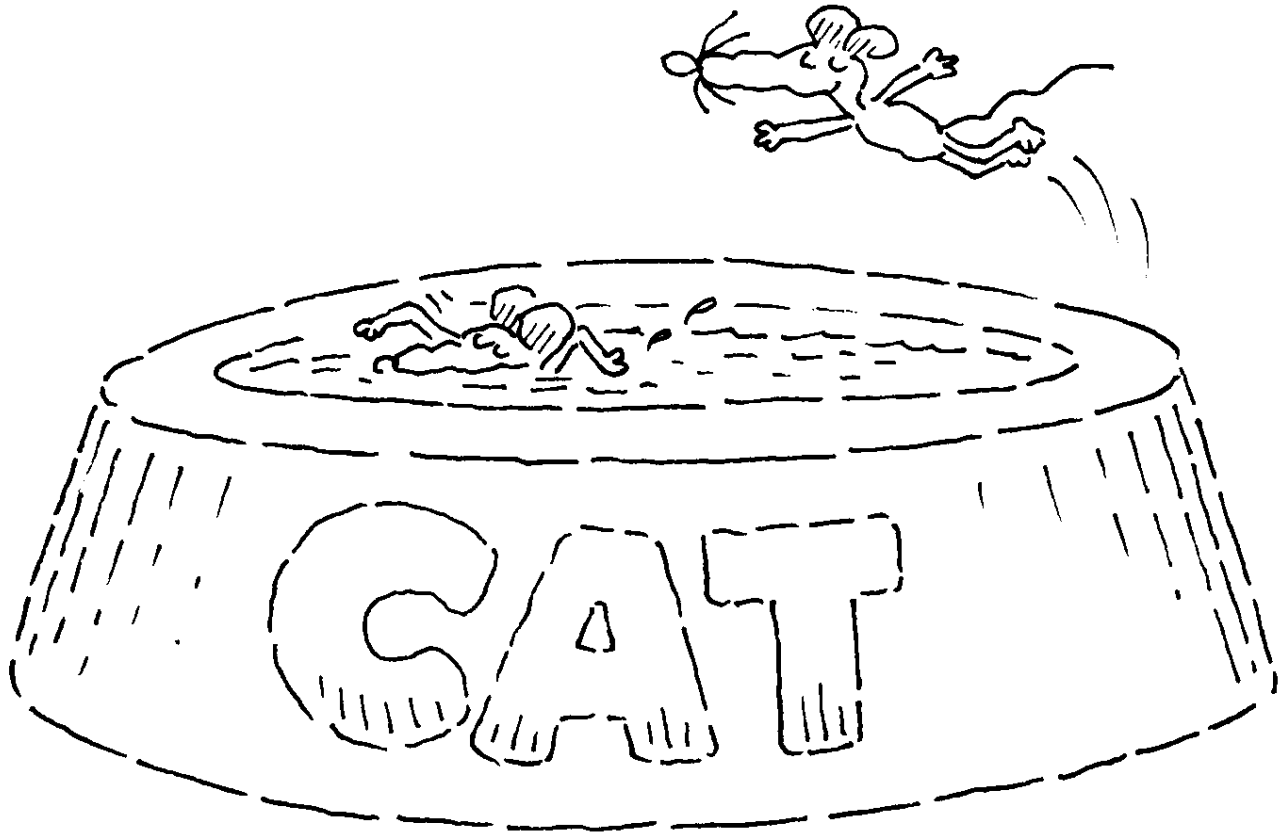
How was your trip to New York?

We had a marvelous time! New York really has a lot to offer. We took in a couple of Broadway shows, had dinner at some fancy restaurants, met all kinds of interesting people, shopped on Fifth Avenue, and visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Sounds great! You saw and did a great deal on your vacation. It must have been quite enjoyable.

It sure was! It's true that **variety is the spice of life!** We hadn't had a vacation for a long time, so **we took great pleasure in doing many different things to make our stay as enjoyable as possible.** We'll remember this vacation for a long time.

# When the Cat's Away the Mice Will Play



**(some people will misbehave when they are not being watched)**

Orlando, are you going on that Alaskan cruise with your parents?

No, Mrs. Stevenson. I've got to stick around for school.

Then you'll have the house all to yourself.

That's right. My folks'll be gone for ten days. I was thinking of having a party this weekend to celebrate Susanna's birthday.

Oh, **I see. When the cat's away the mice will play.**

Not exactly. Mom might have said OK. She likes Susanna. Anyway, **since my folks won't be around to say no, I see no reason for us not to have a little fun.**

It looks like your mind is made up. You want to have the party, even if it might go against your parents' wishes.

Don't worry. We'll be extra careful, and I'll tell Mom and Dad about the party as soon as they get back.

## **Section Seven**

# **Friend or Foe?**

# Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder



**(people often feel more affectionate toward each other when they are apart)**

Say, Peter. I haven't seen you with Lillian these days. Where has she been hiding out? She's been traveling overseas for the past two months. To tell you the truth, I never thought I'd miss her so much.

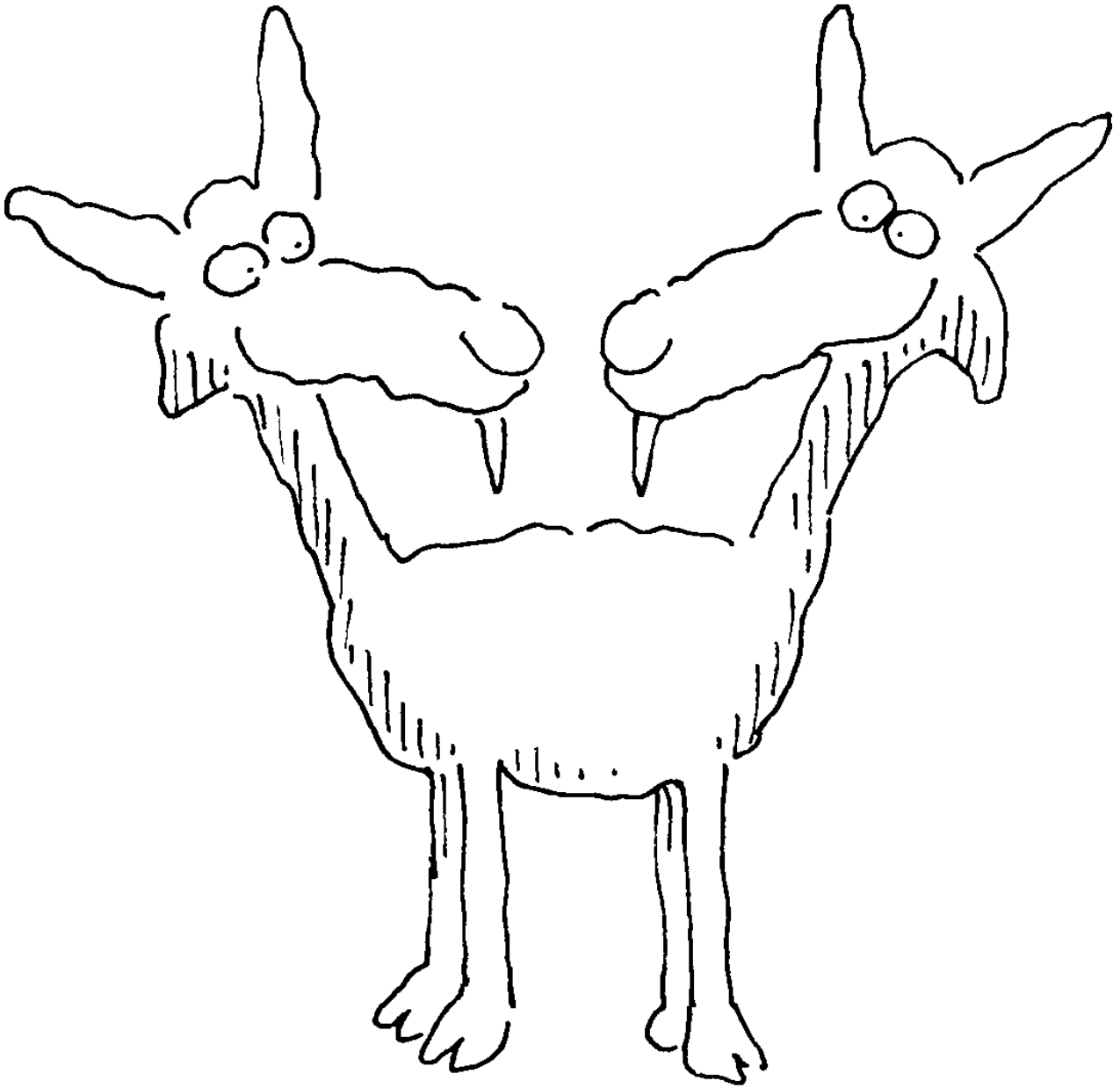
They say that **absence makes the heart grow fonder**.

It's true in my case, anyway. I guess I was taking Lillian for granted. I didn't realize how much she means to me until she was gone.

I think most people react the same way. **When two people are separated, they often feel more affectionate toward each other.** Tell me. When is Lillian due back?

In a couple of weeks. I can hardly wait.

# Beauty Is in the Eye of the Beholder



**(what seems ordinary or ugly to one person might seem beautiful to another)**

I still can't figure out how Janet could have fallen for Paul. He's no prize at all! When you come right down to it, she's nothing to rave about either. Clearly, **beauty is in the eye of the beholder**.

I'll second that! **What appears attractive to one person might seem ugly or ordinary to someone else.** I guess we should remember that looks aren't everything.

You're right. Janet and Paul are both very nice people.



# Blood Is Thicker Than Water



**(members of the same family share stronger ties with each other than they do with others)**

Hi, Gina. I'm here to pick up your truck. Remember? You promised to let me borrow it for the day.

That I did, but I'm going to have to disappoint you. My brother took the truck this morning to pick up some furniture at a warehouse. He needed it right away, so I gave it to him.

Boy, that really leaves me high and dry, but I guess **blood is thicker than water**.

Don't take it personally. This was a very pressing matter. Besides, he should be back in a couple of hours. Then the truck's yours. By the way, I gave my brother the truck because he needed it right away, not because **family members share stronger ties with each other than they do with others**. I would have done the same for you if you had been in his position.

# Familiarity Breeds Contempt



**(when you know people well you will discover their weaknesses and you may come to scorn them)**

Ms. Carruthers was appointed head librarian because of her organizational abilities and her plans for improving the library's services. At first, the other staff members appreciated her ideas and enthusiasm. But after several weeks of working with her, they began to resent her frequent memos and meetings. The more they learned about her management style, the less they liked it. As one librarian said to another, **Familiarity breeds contempt**. The library staff welcomed Ms. Carruthers and her ideas at first, but **after they got to know her better their respect for her changed to dislike and scorn**.

# A Friend in Need Is a Friend Indeed



**(a true friend will help you in a time of trouble)**

Serge, I hear you're having some trouble with American lit. I've already taken that course.

Maybe I can help you out.

No kidding? Do you have the time?

Sure. My time is your time.

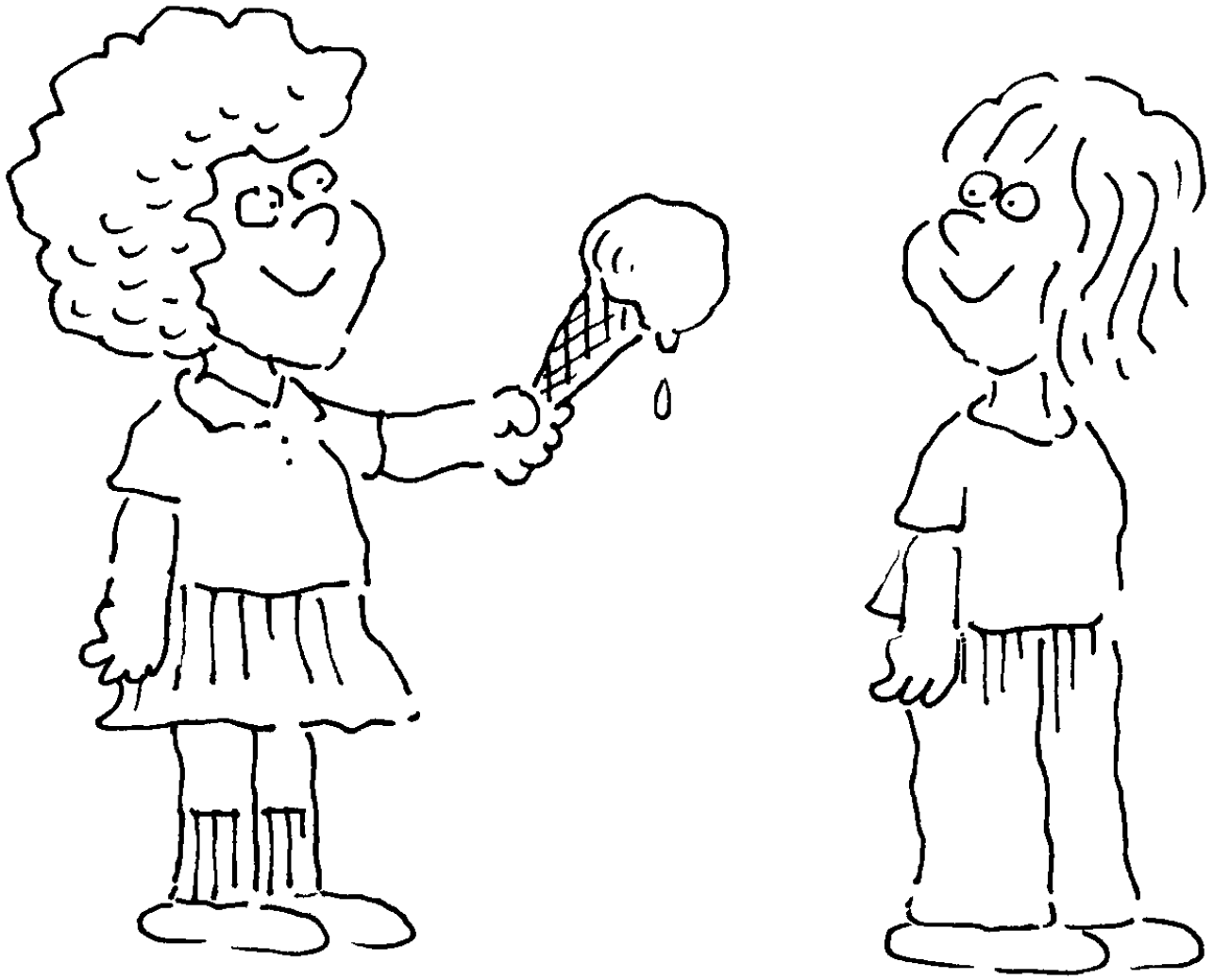
**A friend in need is a friend indeed!**

Come on, I wouldn't let you down! We've been pals for a long time, and I know you'd help me out if I needed it. After all, **true friends come to your aid whenever you need them.**

I'm glad you feel that way. I do, too. Now, I'd like to get your interpretation of this passage from *Tom Sawyer*.

No problem. I remember when we discussed it in class.

# A Friend Who Shares Is a Friend Who Cares



**(a true friend unselfishly shares what he or she has)**

Hi, Janet. What brings you to Benito's Pizza Parlor today?

Oh. Hi, Jud. I'm treating myself to a nice lunch. You know, this place serves the best pizza around. Have a seat and join me. I've got more than enough for the both of us.

If you insist! I suppose I could take that small piece there off your hands.

Be my guest! After all, **a friend who shares is a friend who cares.**

Thanks. The feeling's mutual. **True friends show that they really care about you by unselfishly sharing what they have.**

Don't give it a second thought. I know you would do the same for me.

# Imitation Is the Sincerest Form of Flattery



(trying to be like someone is the most genuine way of praising that person)

Well, Cindy. What do you want to be when you grow up?

I want to be a baseball player, just like Ron Fox. He's my hero. Look at the number of home runs he has hit, and look at how the fans cheer when he comes out on the field.

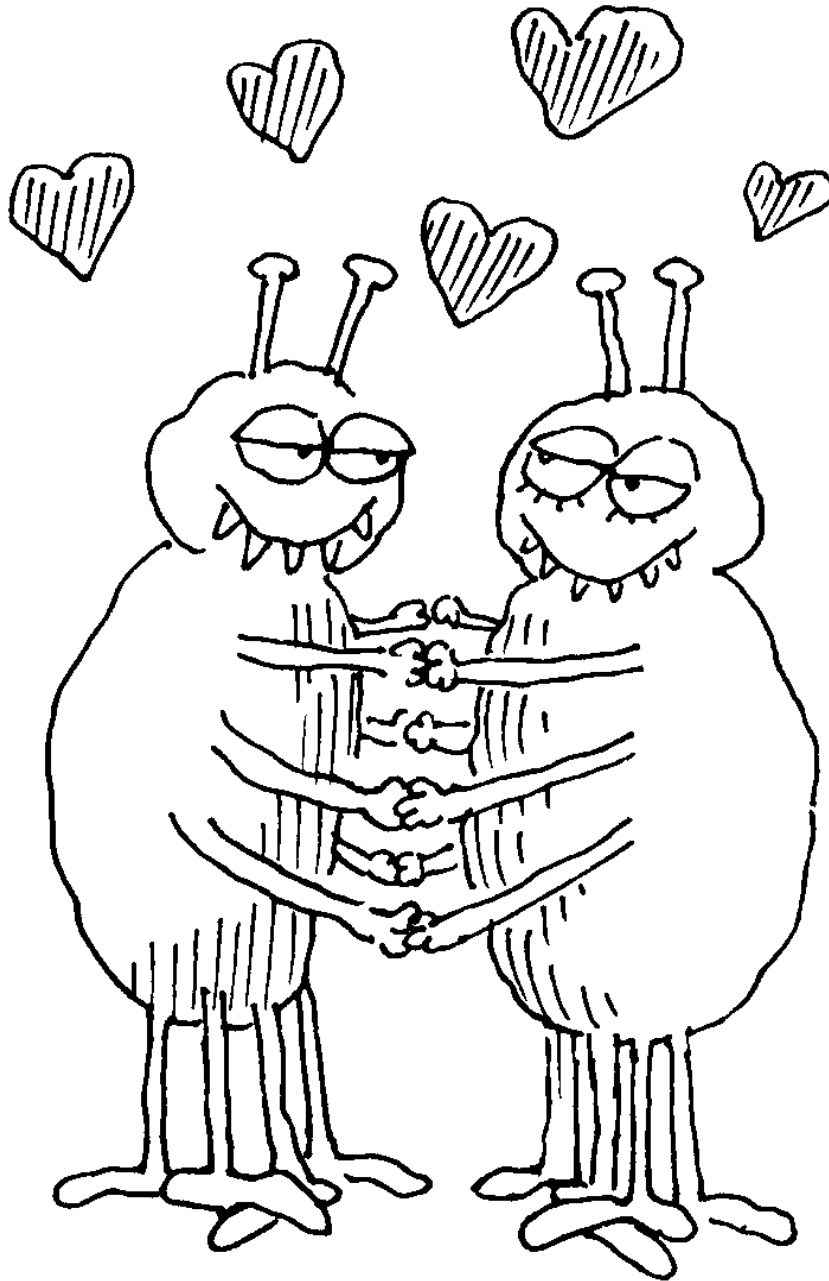
He certainly is popular and well liked. I can understand why you would want to be like him. After all, **imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.**

I'd give anything to meet him in person and get his autograph.

Perhaps that can be arranged. The team is playing here this Saturday. Maybe we can talk to him and get his autograph after the game. **If you tell him that you want to be a baseball player just like him, he will feel very complimented.**

Gee, Uncle Joe. That would be great! Let's go!

# Love Is Blind



**(one sees no faults in the person one loves)**

I just don't know how Carolyn has stuck it out with Matt for so many years.

They've been married for over thirty years, haven't they?

True—in spite of the fact that he's such a rude and selfish person.

He has been far from the ideal husband, and yet she puts up with him and completely ignores his shortcomings.

No doubt about it, **love is blind!**

You're right. Apparently **she loves him so much that she doesn't see his faults.**

Well, I can't say the same about my husband. I'm not blind to his faults, and he's not blind to mine! But I think we have a good marriage anyway.

## **Section Eight**

# **Words to Live By**

# Actions Speak Louder Than Words



**(people's actions are more convincing than their words are)**

Listen, Jose. If you intend to ask Consuelo to marry you, you've got to get moving! Why haven't you asked her yet?

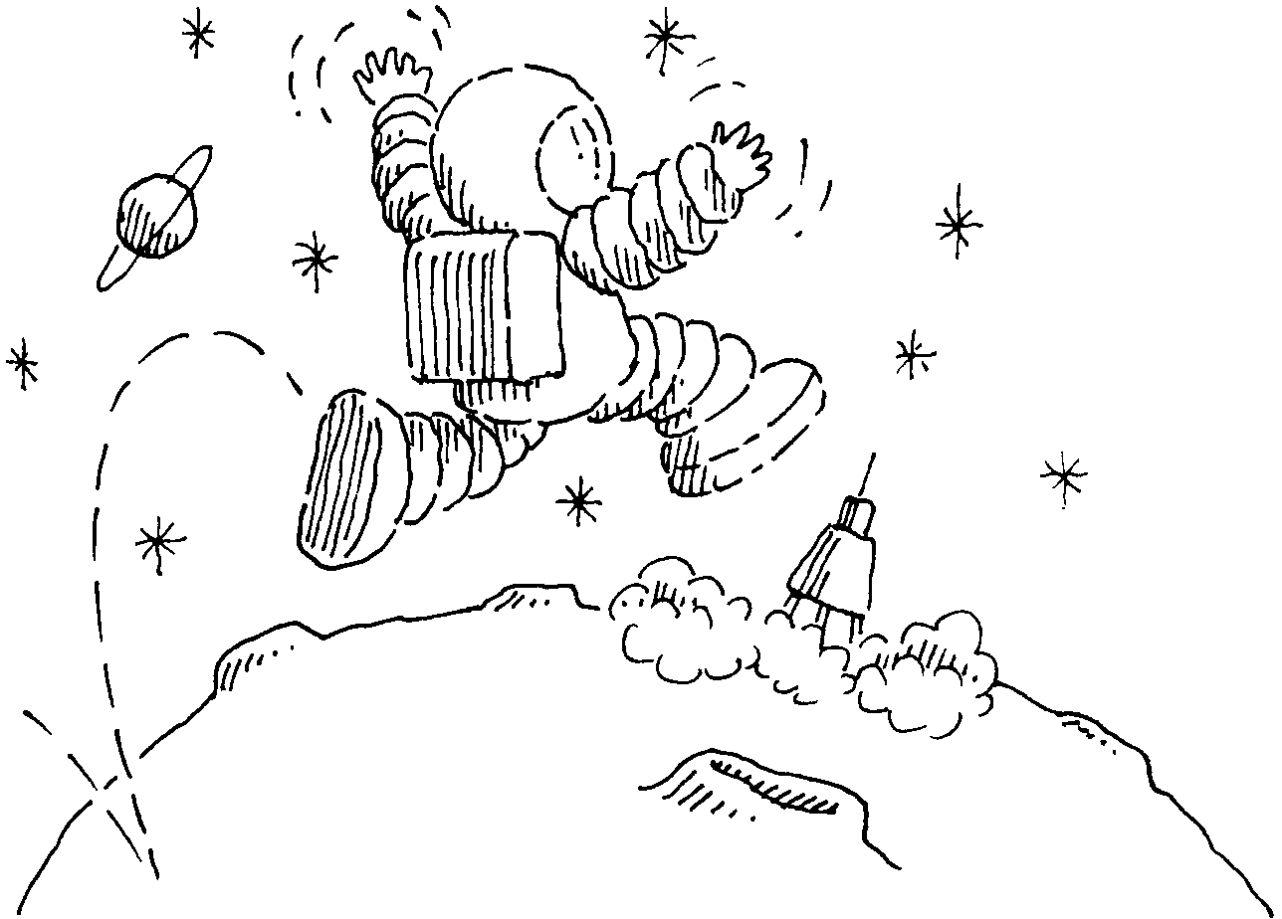
I guess I'm afraid to take the plunge, although I know she loves me and I certainly love her. Well, the other day Mario told me he was going to buy a ring and ask Consuelo to become engaged. You can't just keep talking about marrying Consuelo. You've got to do something about it. Remember: **actions speak louder than words.**

Wow! You're right. **If I want Consuelo to take me seriously, I've got to stop talking about getting engaged and go ask her to marry me.** I just hope I'm not too late.

I don't think you've got anything to worry about. Consuelo has never been that fond of Mario. But if I were you, I'd move quickly. After all, you don't want to take any chances.



# Better Late Than Never



**(it's better to do something late than not to do it at all)**

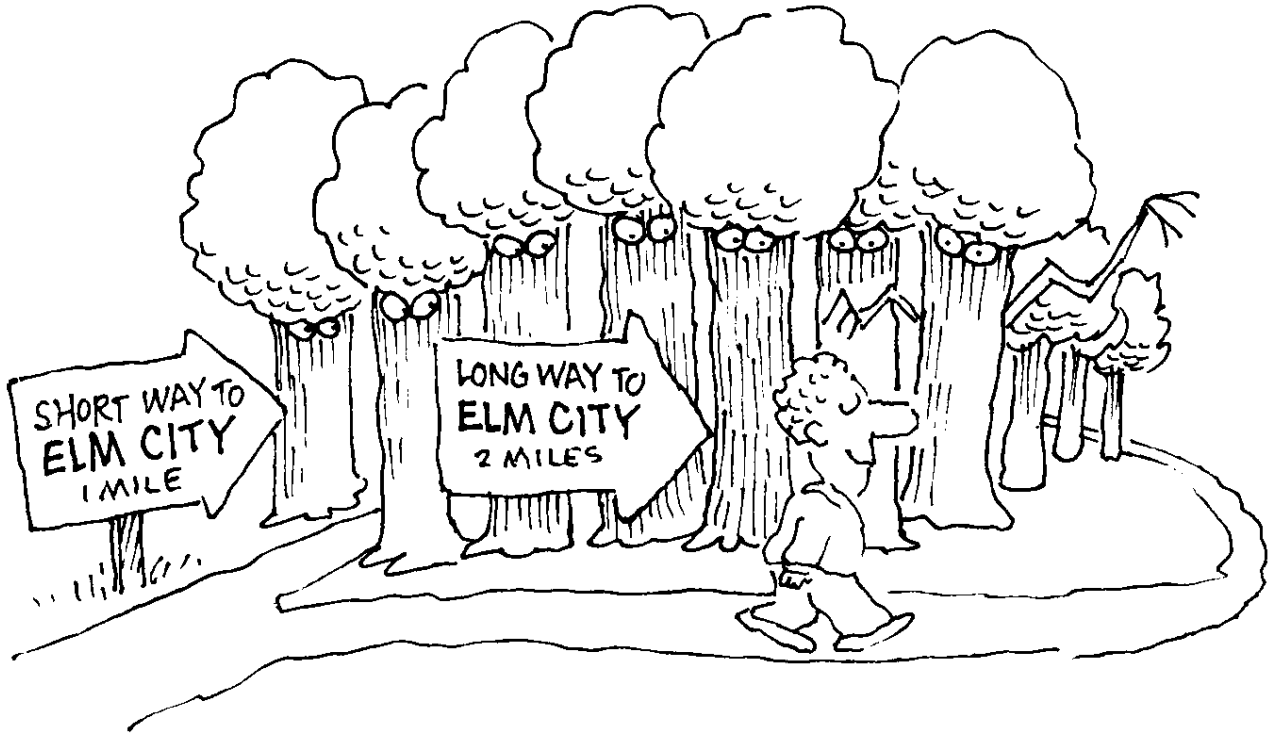
Finally you're here! We thought you'd never make it. Is everything all right?

Sure, we're fine. Please accept our deepest apologies for arriving so late. We got a flat tire on the freeway, and it took us a while to put on the spare. Anyway, here we are. We hope we haven't inconvenienced you.

Don't give it a second thought. **Better late than never.**

Thanks for being so understanding. We almost called you to cancel our plans after we got the tire changed, but we decided **it would be better to show up late than to not show up at all.** You did the right thing. We would have been terribly disappointed if you hadn't come. Let's go on to the dining room and eat now.

# Better Safe Than Sorry



**(it is better to choose a safe course of action than a risky one that could lead to regrets)**

Memorial Day weekend is coming up. Why don't we go visit Herb and Stephie in L.A.?

Sure. I'm game. Should we drive or take the train?

I think it'll be faster if we drive. We can be there in six hours.

The way you drive, probably less! But I'd rather not be on the road with all that traffic on Memorial Day weekend. Let's take the train. **Better safe than sorry.**

You're right. A holiday weekend is a dangerous time to take a car trip. **We should take the train and be safe, rather than risk being hurt in a car accident.**

I'm glad you agree. The train it is!

# A Bird in the Hand Is Worth Two in the Bush



**(something you already have is better than something you might get)**

How's your new job coining along, Sasha?

Oh, the job's fine. I have good working hours and the surroundings are very pleasant. There's only one hitch.

What's that?

The salary isn't too great.

That's a shame. Did you interview for any other jobs?

Yes. A couple of them would have paid much better, but I never got an offer from them, so I figured that. . .

**A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush! Right?**

**Exactly! I accepted this job rather than waiting for a better offer that might not have come.**

# Charity Begins at Home



**(one should take care of one's own family, friends, or fellow citizens before helping other people)**

You're home late again. What have you been up to?

I've been playing Santa Claus. Last night I was at the children's ward of the hospital, and tonight I stopped off at the orphanage to help wrap gifts and put up the Christmas tree.

That's very nice of you, but **charity begins at home**. Your own children haven't seen you at all lately. Don't you think you should pay some attention to them, too?

You have a point, but we have so much and others have so little. I was just trying to spread some Christmas cheer.

I'm sure your efforts are immensely appreciated, but we need your attention, too. I don't think it's unreasonable to ask you to **take care of your own family before going out to help others**.

# Haste Makes Waste



**(when one hurries too much, one is likely to do a poor job and have to waste time doing it over)**

Jacques, I warned you not to be in such a hurry to clear those dirty dishes off the tables! Now look what you did!

OK. So I slipped and dropped all the plates. Don't get so upset. I'll clean up the mess.

That's not the point. How many times do I have to tell you that **haste makes waste?**

I'll admit that **hurrying often creates problems that must be solved**, but this really wasn't my fault. The floor was slippery.

That's no excuse. If you hadn't been rushing around, you would have been more careful and probably wouldn't have slipped.

# Love Makes the World Go Round



**(when people show respect and consideration for one another, the world is a better place)**

What's wrong, Kumi? Why are you so upset?

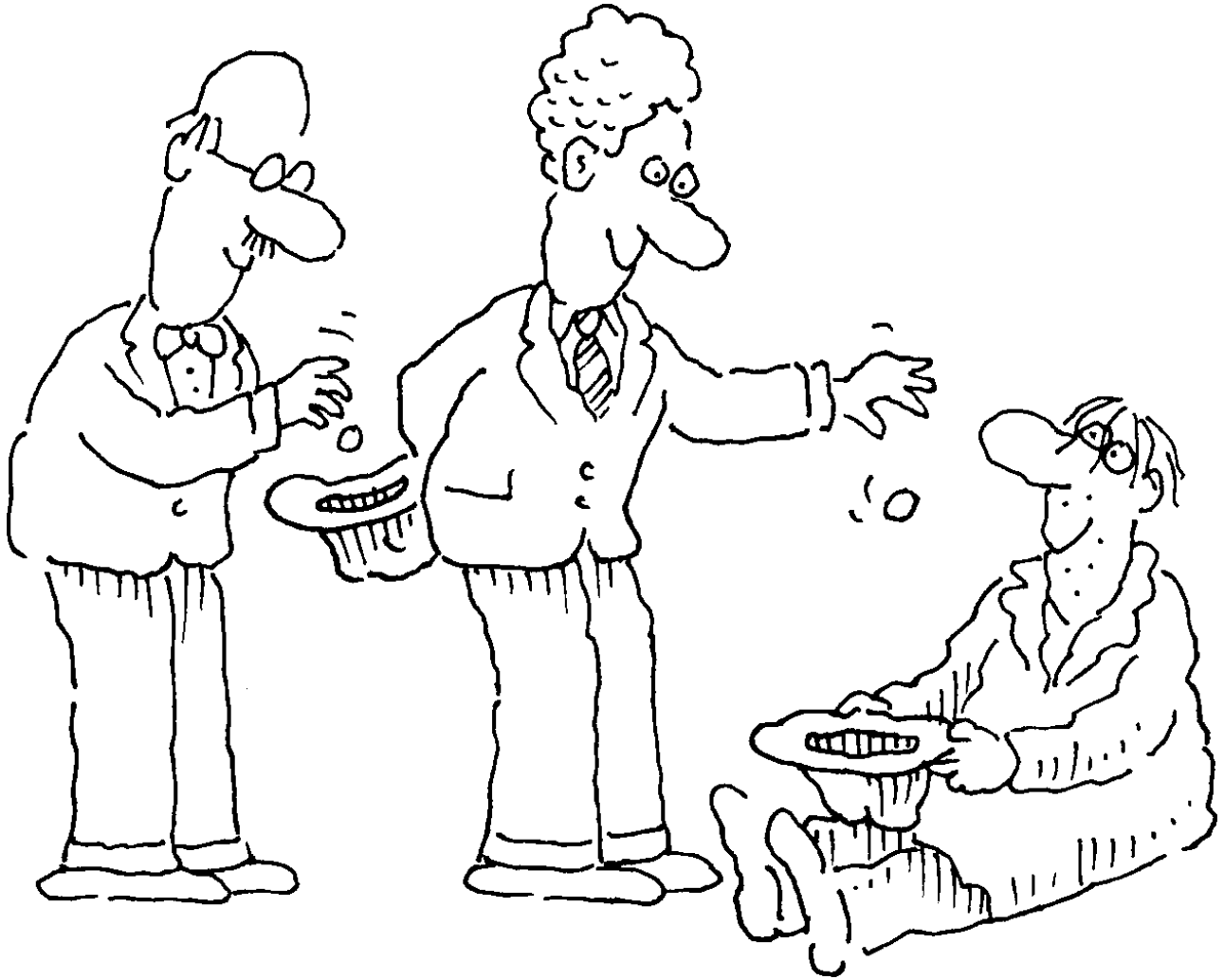
It's those new neighbors of ours. They play their stereo so loud at night that I can't sleep. I've had it. I'm going to go over there and give them a piece of my mind!

Hold it! You won't accomplish anything by hollering at them. You're all worked up now. Why not wait until you cool down a bit? Don't you know that **love makes the world go round?**

I agree that **the world would be a better place to live if people respected and loved each other**, but right now. . .

Not another word! Let's try it my way. I'll bake some cookies, and later on we'll take them next door and introduce ourselves. We can casually mention the problem after we get to know our new neighbors. I'm sure they'll cooperate.

# One Good Turn Deserves Another



**(a favor should be repaid with another favor)**

Eva felt very sorry for her next-door neighbor, Elaine. The two women had been living next to each other for years and had become close friends. Years ago, when Eva lost her husband, Elaine was there to console her and bolster her spirits. Eva had never forgotten the emotional support of her friend, and she strongly believed that **one good turn deserves another**. Now Elaine was quite ill, so Eva made a point of spending the days with her friend, tending to her needs and helping to nurse her back to health. It was not just because she felt that **Elaine's kindness should be repaid with another favor**. Eva was genuinely concerned about her friend and wanted to help her out.

# You Have to Take the Good with the Bad



**(you must accept disappointment along with success)**

Say, John. You look rather depressed. What's up?

That deal I was working on fell through, and the whole matter has gotten me down.

But you should know that in life **you have to take the good with the bad**. Look at it this way.

Your last two business transactions worked out quite well, didn't they?

True enough. I guess I'm spoiled.

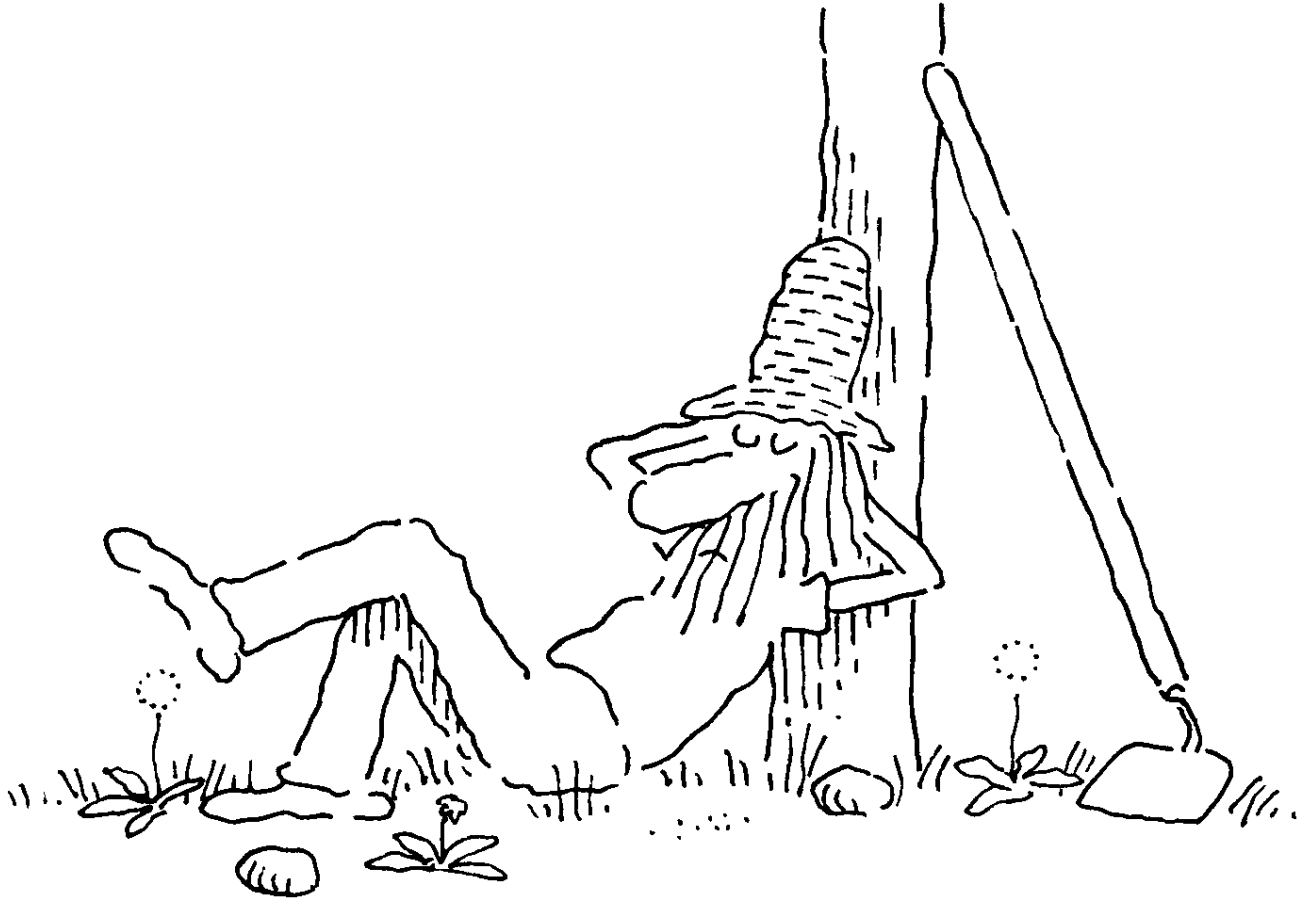
Come on, don't be so hard on yourself. It's not easy learning that **you must accept disappointments and defeats as well as successes**.

You're right. I'm sure I'll feel better after I have a bite to eat. Come on, let's go out for a hamburger.

You're on!



# You Reap What You Sow



**(the amount of effort you put into something determines how much you will get out of it)**

Chuck felt bad about not going with his friends for pizza after the school dance, but with a final exam coming up in a couple of days, he knew that **you reap what you sow**. As it turned out, his decision to go home and study for the exam was a good one. **His efforts at studying paid off with a high grade on the exam.** Unfortunately, his friends did not score half as well.

## **Section Nine**

# **Some Things Never Change**

# After the Feast Comes the Reckoning



**(people must always pay the price of their excesses)**

Hey, Bill. Is that another new jacket you're wearing?

Yeah. Just got it the other day. Like it?

I sure do. But tell me—lately you've been spending like a madman. Where's all this money coming from?

No problem. I've been buying everything on credit.

Easy there, pal. Aren't you getting in over your head? Remember: **after the feast comes the reckoning.**

I know I've been spending a lot, but so far I've been able to make my monthly payments.

Sure. But what happens if you get laid off? That construction job you have won't last forever, and **you'll still have to pay for your excesses.**

I know, but I'll cross that bridge when and if I get to it.

# Bad News Travels Fast



**(reports of problems and misfortune spread quickly)**

I just heard about Joey's loss. He must have taken it quite hard.

He sure did! His investments were completely wiped out when the price of those speculative stocks fell. But how did you find out so soon?

**Bad news travels fast!** The office staff has been talking about nothing else. People say he's pretty broken up.

No doubt about it! It's amazing the way **news about people's problems spreads so quickly.**

Well, knowing Joey I'm sure he'll get back on his feet in no time. He has a knack for making money. He won't let this bad break keep him down.

# The Best Things in Life Are Free



**(the things that give a person the most happiness  
don't cost anything)**

Good afternoon, Mrs. Thompson. It's nice seeing you again. How did you enjoy the holidays? They were really special for me. We had a big family reunion with all my children and grandchildren. I can't tell you the joy that their visit brought to our home.

I can certainly understand how you must have felt to have your family around you. After all, **the best things in life are free.**

Absolutely! We spent many happy hours doing things as a family and playing with the grandchildren. Just think! **Those hours that gave us such satisfaction and joy didn't cost a penny!**

How wonderful! It sure would be hard to top that!

# The Bigger They Are, the Harder They Fall



**(the more important someone is, the more severe are the consequences of his or her failure)**

Say, Ramon. I heard that Phil Jacobson is moving out to the West Coast. What's going on? I heard that he was dismissed from that big corporation he directed for the past fifteen years. Boy! That's quite a blow!

It sure is. **The bigger they are, the harder they fall!** Rumor has it that he led the corporation into insolvency by approving high-risk loans and bad investments.

I guess he deserved what he got.

Even so, I feel kind of sorry for the guy. **The more important you are, the worse it must be to fail.**

Phil's a tough young man, though. He'll get back on his feet soon.

# Good Things Come in Small Packages



**(small containers can hold objects of great value)**

I was truly surprised on my birthday. I didn't expect such a lovely gift.

Your gold bracelet is gorgeous! Did you get many other gifts?

Yes, and most of them came in big boxes with fancy wrapping paper. Of course, I couldn't resist opening them first. I got some sweaters and shoes that I wanted, but the bracelet came in the smallest box—which I opened last.

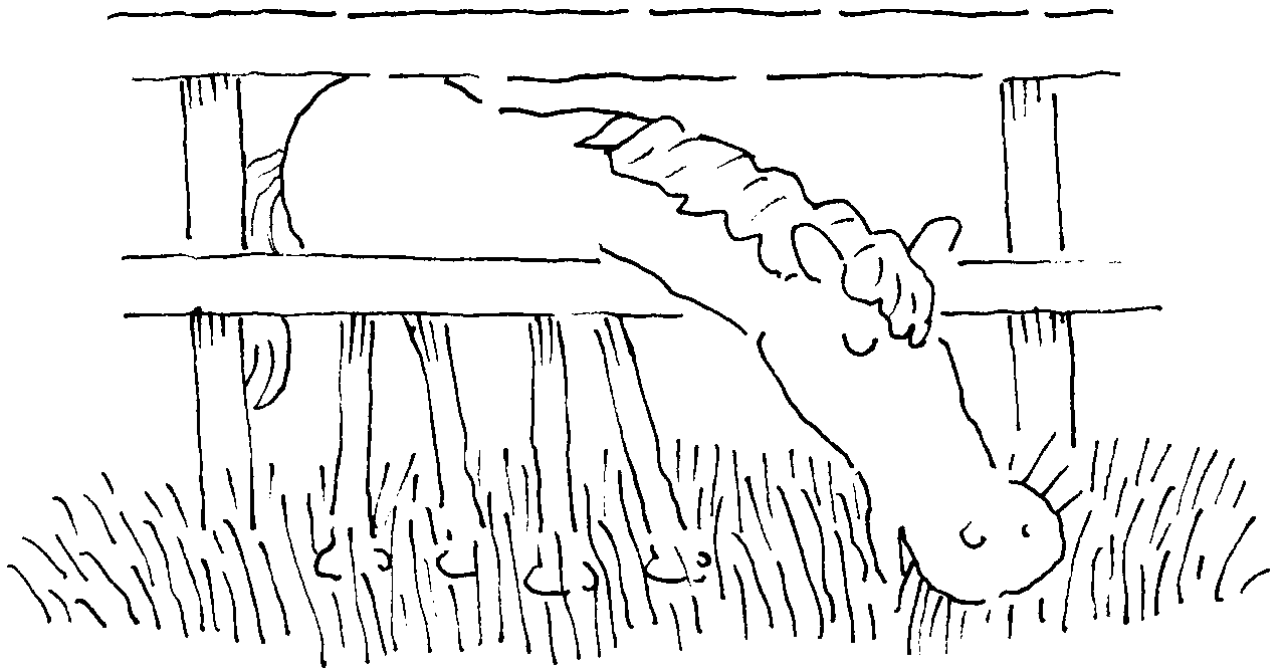
There you go. **Good things come in small packages.**

How true. Not only did I get the bracelet, but I got two small charms to put on it as well.

**Wonderful objects can indeed be found in small containers.** This has been the best birthday ever for me!

I hope you have many more just as nice as this one!

# The Grass Is Always Greener on the Other Side of the Fence

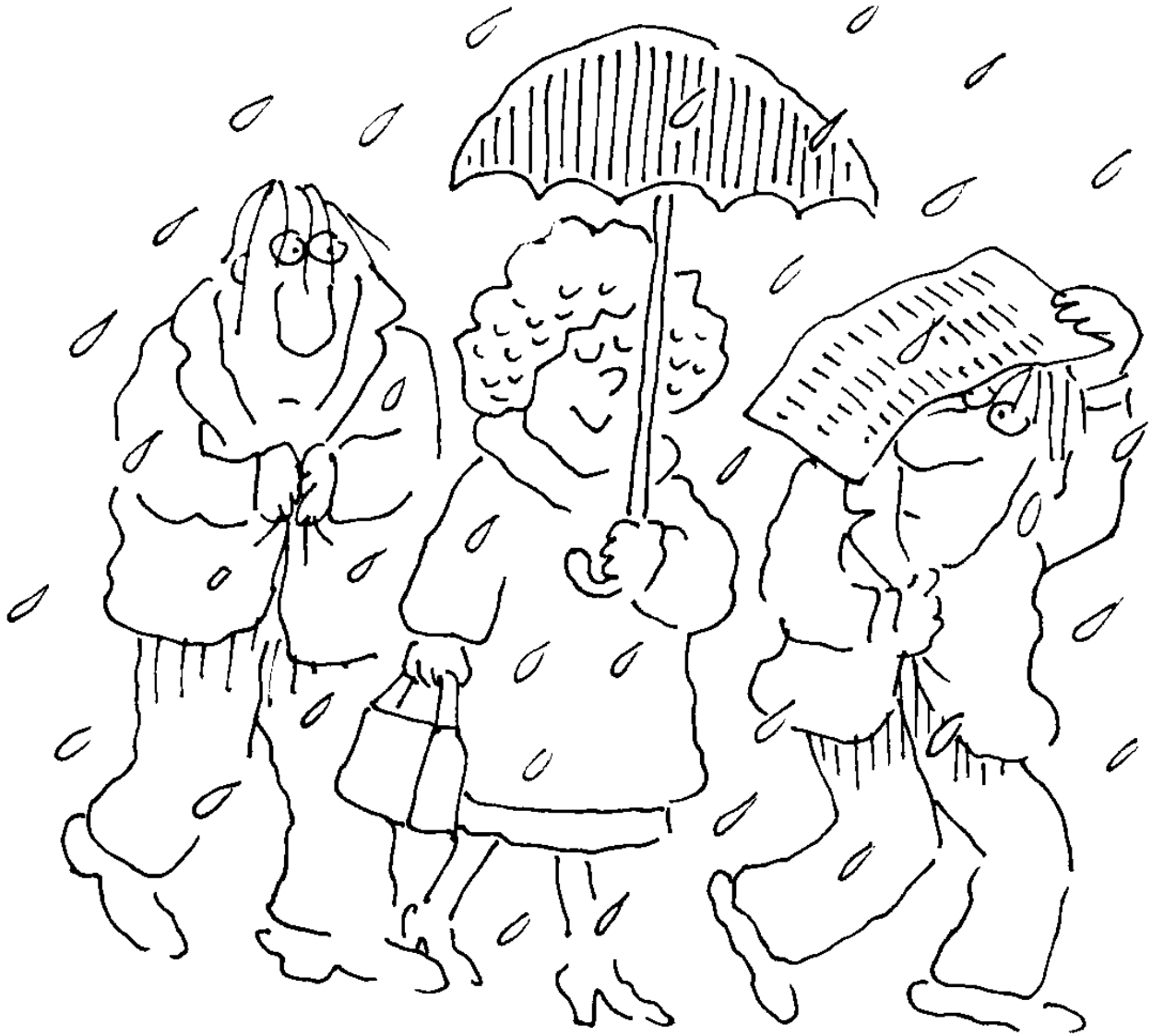


(another place or situation always appears to be better than your own)

Jim and Alex had been friends since childhood, but as adults their lives went in different directions. Jim achieved great success in business, while Alex worked as a clerk in a department store. Although Alex was basically happy with his job, he would often think that **the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence** when he considered Jim's financial success. It appeared to Alex that **his friend was much better off and in a more advantageous position than he was**. What Alex did not know was that Jim was not happy with his job and that his health was suffering because of the constant stress.



# Hindsight Is Better Than Foresight



**(people see and understand things more clearly after they've happened than before they've happened)**

Say, Boris. How's the import-export business these days?

Generally, booming. But I'm losing out on a lot of business with Japanese firms because of my inability to communicate in Japanese. I really regret not studying the language years ago, when I had the chance.

Unfortunately, **hindsight is better than foresight.**

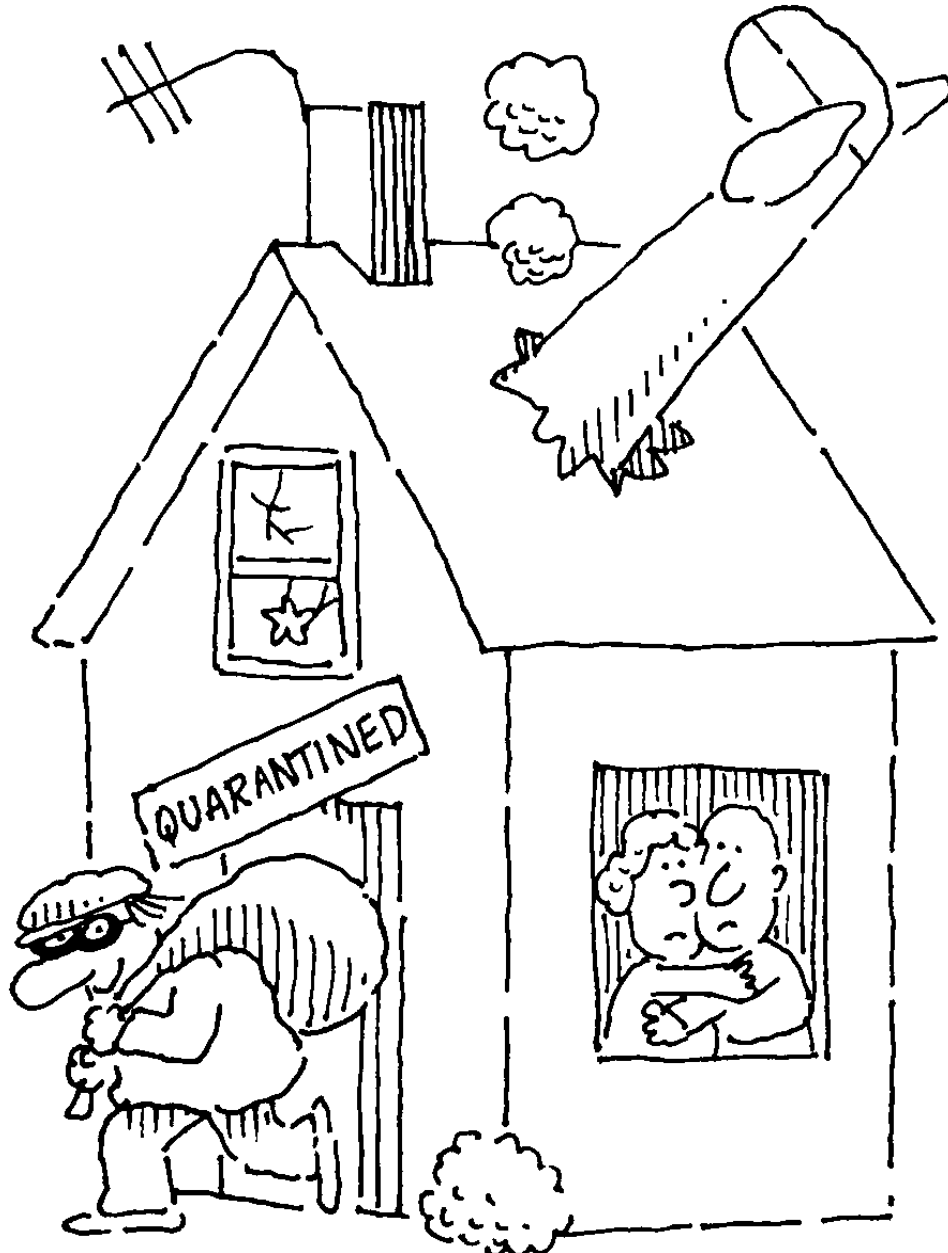
True enough, but **now that I realize what I should have done, I'm sorry that I didn't have the foresight to do it before.**

Oh, well. It's never too late to learn. Why not check out the language program at City College?

They usually offer classes in Japanese.

I just might do that. Thanks for the info.

# It Never Rains but It Pours



**(good and bad things tend to happen in groups)**

Whew! I've had it! Thank heavens they're finally gone. If they had stayed one more day, I would have gone out of my mind.

I'll admit our guests overstayed their welcome, but don't worry. We'll rest up this weekend.

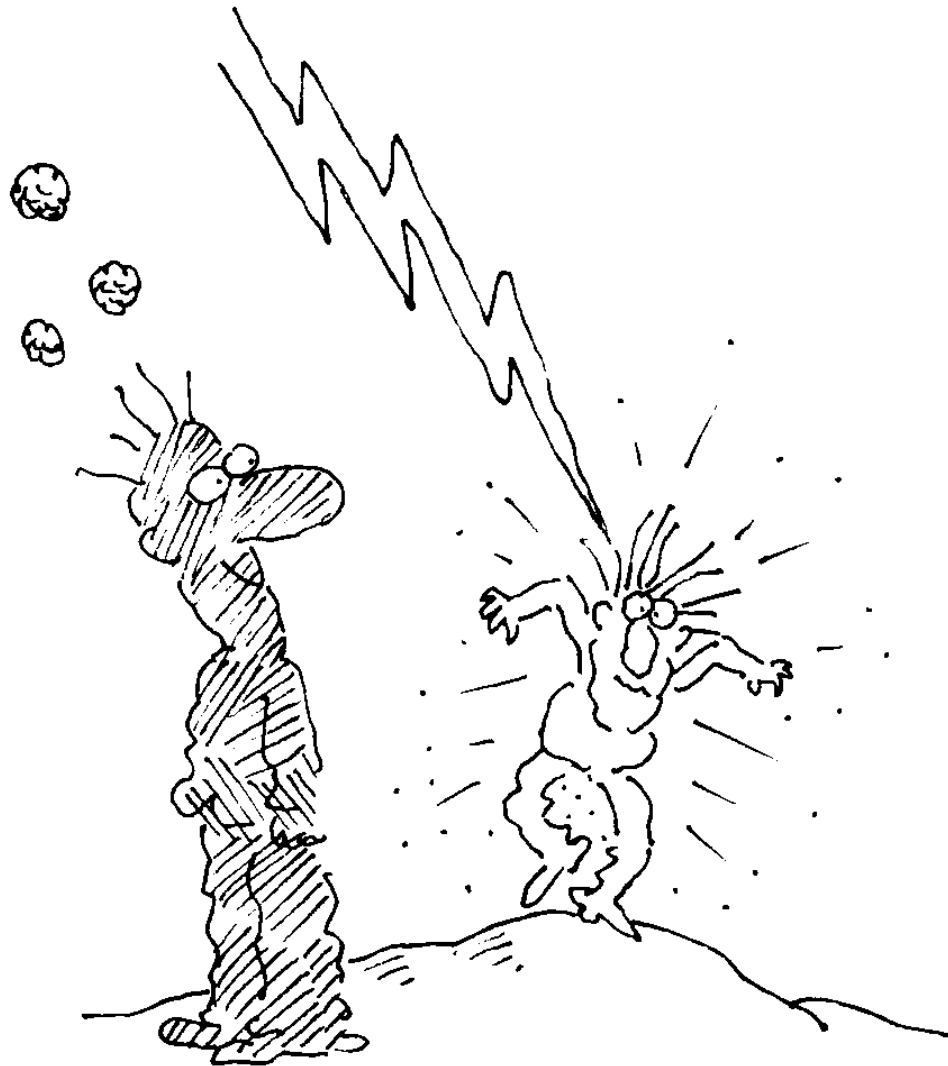
Have you forgotten that your folks are scheduled to arrive tomorrow?

Holy smokes! **It never rains but it pours!** And they said they wanted to stay through the holidays.

Why is it that **troublesome situations never come up one at a time? They always seem to happen all at once.**

I'll call Mom and Dad and ask them if they can put off their visit for a week. I'm sure they'll understand. We need some time by ourselves.

# Lightning Never Strikes Twice in the Same Place



**(the same misfortune won't happen twice to the same person)**

Hi, Gus. I'm glad to see you're up and about.

Thanks. After that truck plowed into my car last month, I thought it was all over for me. I'm really lucky to be alive.

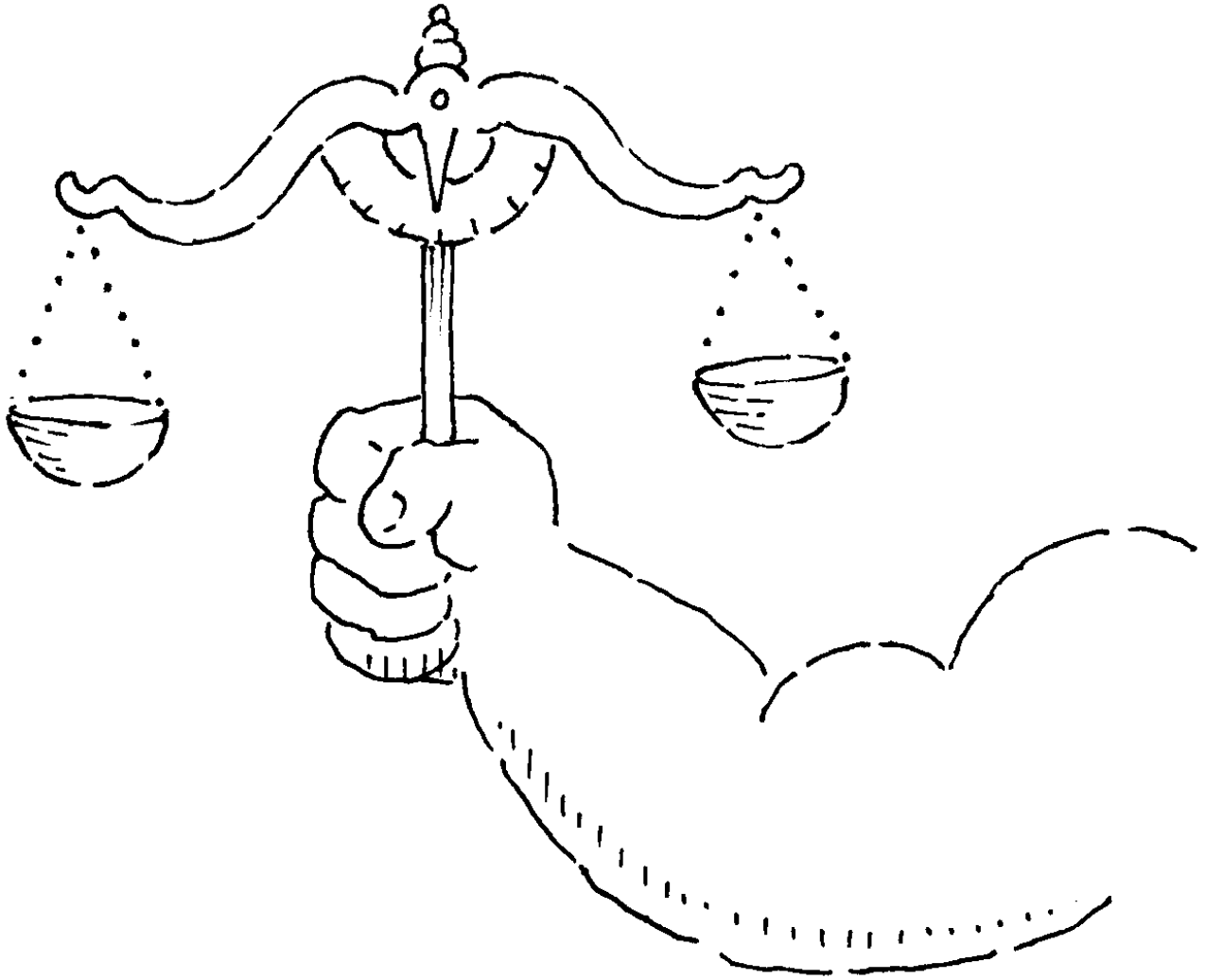
That's for sure. It must have been quite a traumatic experience for you. Has your car been repaired yet?

Yes, it has. But I won't be driving it anymore. I'm not taking any chances on being hit again. Come on, now. You can't let one unfortunate incident keep you from ever driving again.

**Lightning never strikes twice in the same place.**

That's what people say, but it's hard for me to believe that **a person can't encounter the same type of misfortune twice.** For the time being, I'll be taking public transportation to work.

# Might Makes Right



**(the stronger of two opponents will always control the situation)**

Hi, Maya. I see you're studying for the history exam tomorrow.

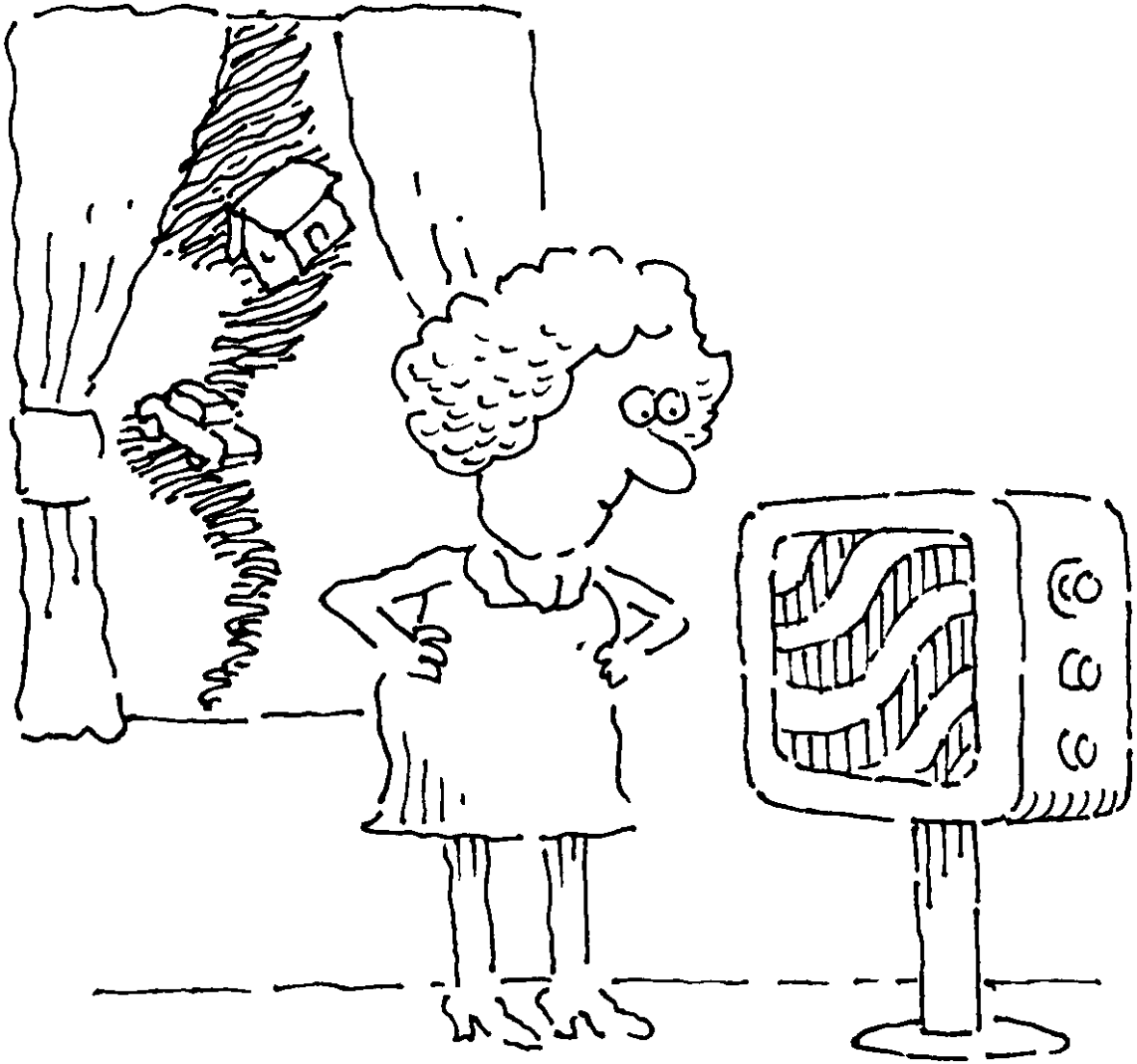
I'm trying, but I get so distressed reading about all the people and countries that have been taken over by superior armed forces. Why is it so hard for people to live and let live?

Haven't you heard? **Might makes right!** All through the course of history **the stronger of two opponents has always won out over the weaker one.**

Sure. I guess it's human nature, but that doesn't excuse all the violence that takes place when one nation subdues another one.

Don't let it get you down now. You need to go into that exam with a clear head. What was, was. What will be, will be.

# No News Is Good News



**(if one does not hear the outcome of a situation, that outcome must be positive)**

Hello, Luis. Where have you been keeping yourself lately?

Oh, I've been busy fixing up the condo.

No wonder I haven't seen you around. By the way, what do you hear from your roommate?

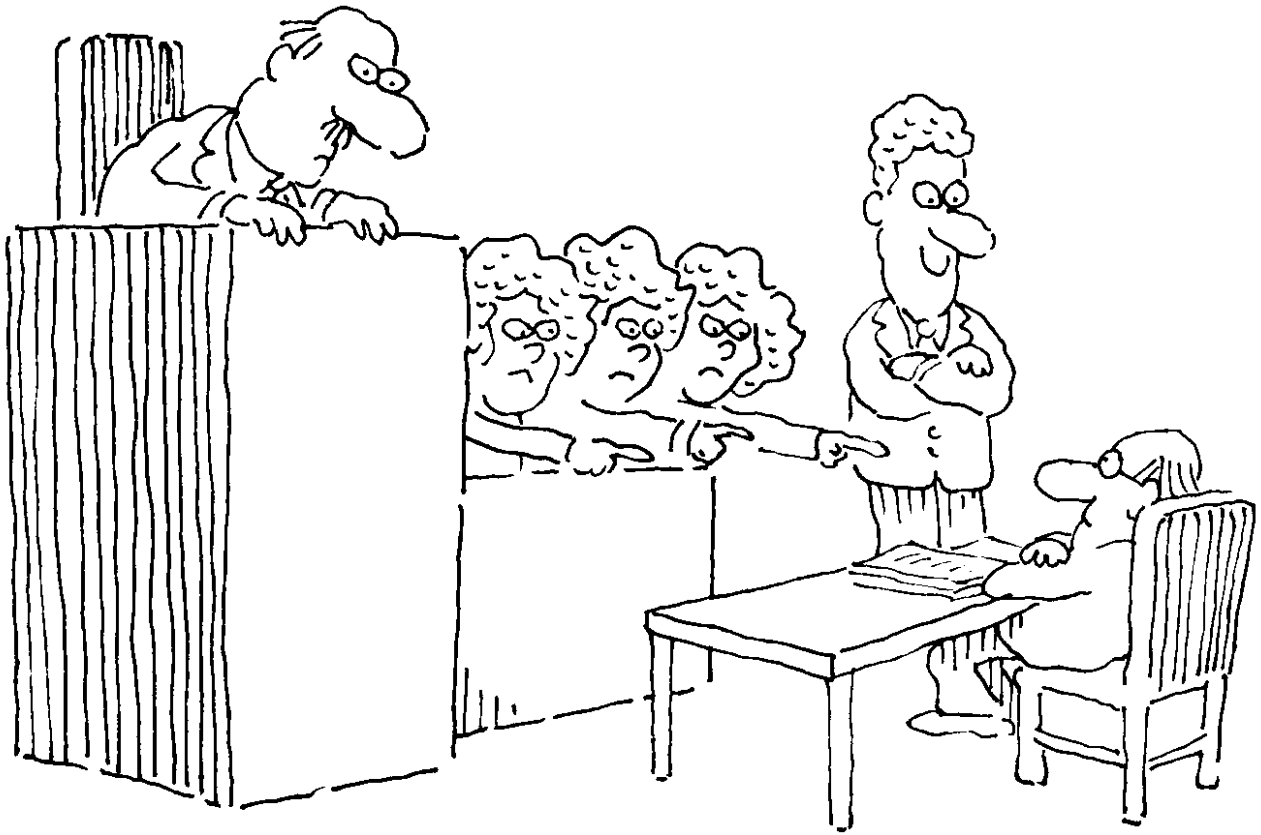
Not a word for a month now. **I guess no news is good news.**

It's too bad he had to leave so suddenly. What was the problem?

There was a serious illness in his family. I asked him to keep me informed, but **since I've received no information, everything must be OK so far.**

I sure hope so. I know you'll be glad when he gets back.

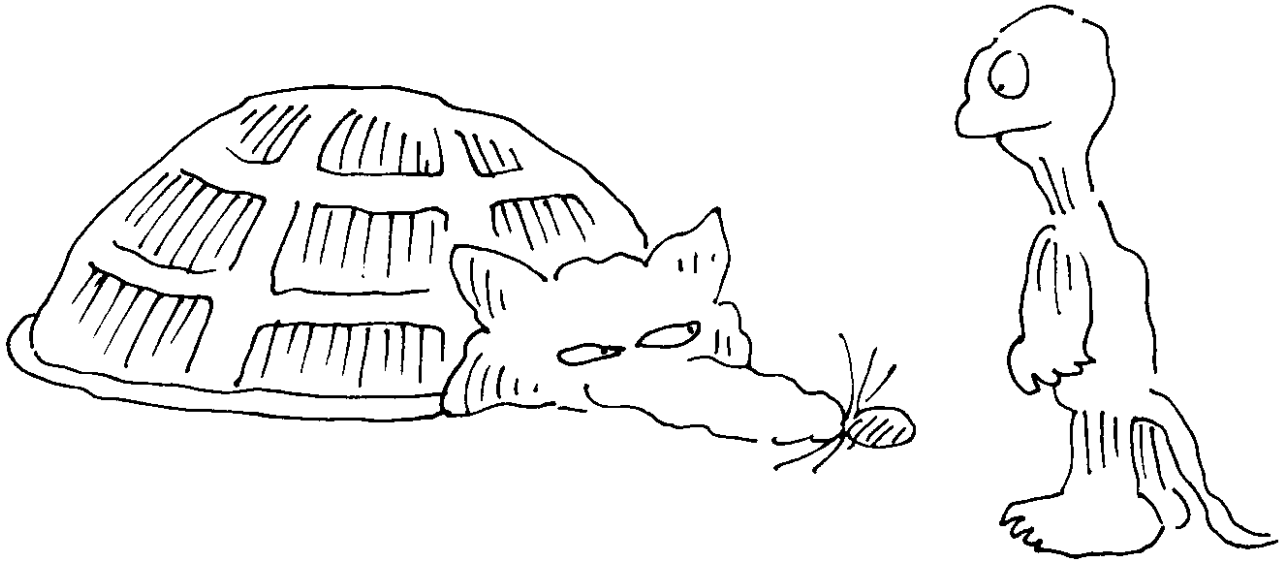
# Nothing Hurts like the Truth



**(it is painful to discover an unpleasant truth about oneself)**

Since childhood Jan had a flair for music, and as he was growing up he trained long and hard for a career as a concert pianist. Although he believed he played well, in truth he was not particularly gifted. He refused to accept this fact, and against his teacher's wishes he decided to give a debut recital. The critics all praised his performance; nevertheless, they were unanimous in their opinion that he did not have the necessary talent to become a great concert artist. Upon reading the reviews, Jan thought that **nothing hurts like the truth**. For the first time he became aware of his shortcomings, and **it pained him greatly to accept the fact that he lacked the talent to play on the concert stage**.

# Possession Is Nine-Tenths of the Law



**(the person who possesses something has the strongest claim to owning it)**

Say, Chris, that's a nice gold chain you're wearing. Did you buy it, or did someone give it to you?

Why are you asking?

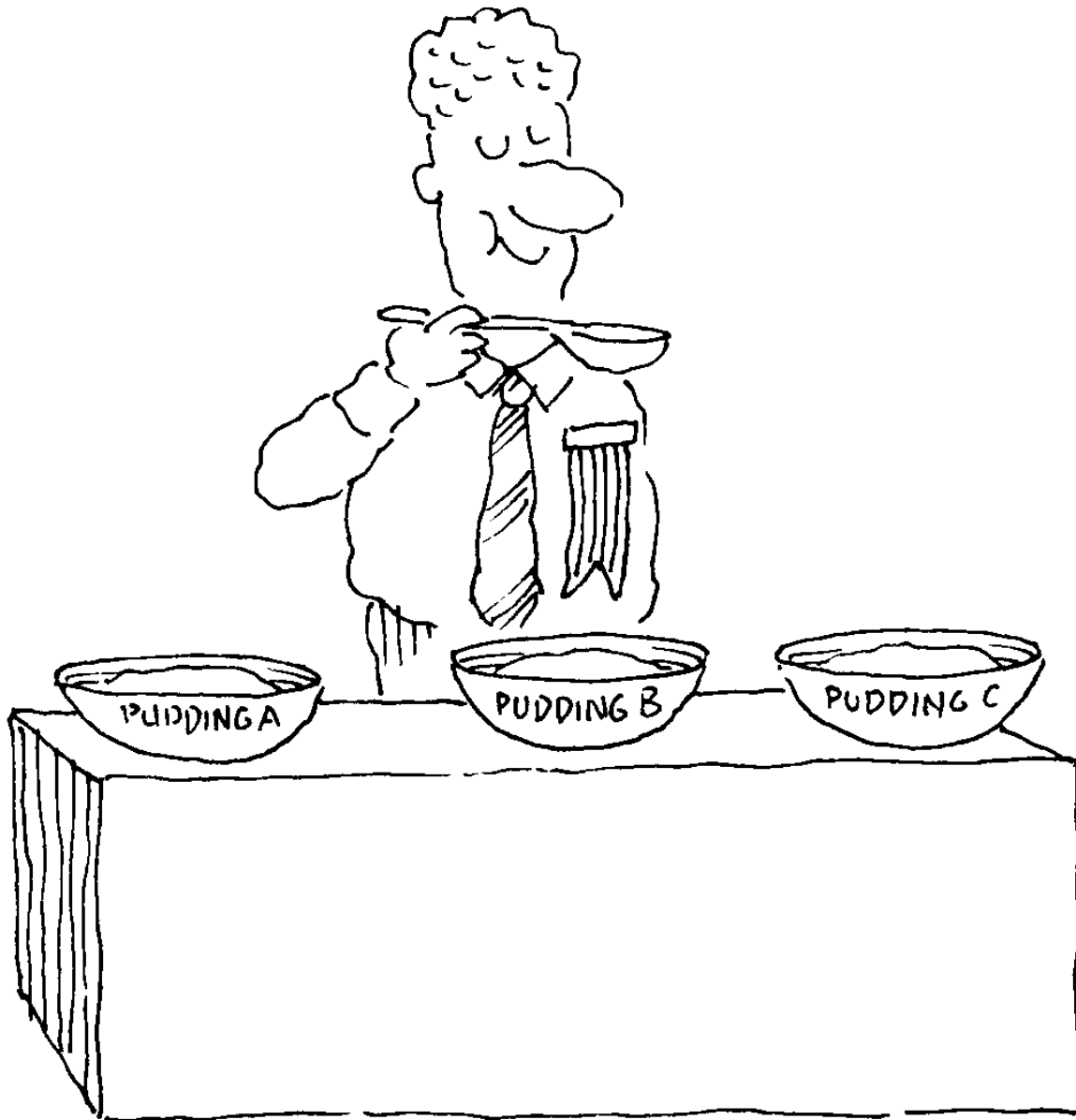
Well, it looks just like the one I lost a couple of days ago.

To tell you the truth, I found it on the sidewalk on my way home from school. And what's more, I intend to keep it! After all, **possession is nine-tenths of the law.**

Yeah, but it doesn't really belong to you. What if it's mine?

How are you going to prove it? Your chain wasn't one of a kind. **Since this chain is in my possession now, I lay claim to it.** Maybe you misplaced yours somewhere. Why not look around? It could very well turn up.

# The Proof of the Pudding Is in the Eating



**(the only way to judge something is to try it)**

Hey, Pete. How come you don't go out for the basketball team?

Oh, I don't know, coach. I've never had any interest in sports.

But you'd be a natural! I've been observing you in gym class. You're fast and well coordinated, and you have good height.

Yeah, but basketball isn't my thing.

At least you could give it a try. What do you have to lose? **The proof of the pudding is in the eating.**

I never really thought about it. Maybe it would be fun.

Now you're talking! **Give it a try so you can find out if you really like it or not.**

OK, coach. You talked me into it. I'll try out for the team if you agree to let me bow out if I decide I don't like it.



# Index of Proverbs

## A

**Absence makes the heart grow fonder** (people often feel more affectionate toward each other when they are apart) \_\_\_\_\_

**Actions speak louder than words** (people's actions are more convincing than their words are) \_\_\_\_\_

**After the feast comes the reckoning** (people must always pay the price of their excesses) \_\_\_\_\_

**All that glitters is not gold** (some things are not as valuable as they appear to be) \_\_\_\_\_

**An apple a day keeps the doctor away** (eating an apple every day helps a person to stay healthy)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**The apple doesn't fall far from the tree** (children take after their parents) \_\_\_\_\_

## B

**Bad news travels fast** (reports of problems and misfortune spread quickly) \_\_\_\_\_

**Barking dogs seldom bite** (people who threaten others usually do not hurt them) \_\_\_\_\_

**Beauty is in the eye of the beholder** (what seems ordinary or ugly to one person might seem beautiful to another) \_\_\_\_\_

**Beggars can't be choosers** (when a person has nothing, he or she must accept whatever help is offered) \_\_\_\_\_

**The best things in life are free** (the things that give a person the most happiness don't cost anything)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Batter a live coward than a dead hero** (it's better to run from a life-threatening situation than to fight and risk being killed) \_\_\_\_\_

**Better late than never** (it's better to do something late than not to do it at all) \_\_\_\_\_

**Better safe than sorry** (it is better to choose a safe course of action than a risky one that could lead to regrets) \_\_\_\_\_

**The bigger they are, the harder they fall** (the more important someone is, the more severe are the consequences of his or her failure) \_\_\_\_\_

**A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush** (something you already have is better than something you might get) \_\_\_\_\_

**Birds of a feather flock together** (people of the same type seem to gather together) \_\_\_\_\_

**Blood is thicker than water** (members of the same family share stronger ties with each other than they do with others) \_\_\_\_\_

## C

**Charity begins at home** (one should take care of one's own family, friends, or fellow citizens before helping other people) \_\_\_\_\_

**Clothes do not make the man** (a person should not be judged by the clothes he or she wears) \_\_\_\_\_

**Curiosity killed the cat** (it is dangerous to be curious) \_\_\_\_\_

## D

**Do as I say, not as I do** (follow my advice, but don't follow my example) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't bite off more than you can chew** (don't assume more responsibility than you can handle; don't be overconfident) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't bite the hand that feeds you** (don't hurt someone who takes care of you) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't count your chickens before they're hatched** (don't plan on the successful results of something until those results actually occur) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't cry over spilt milk** (don't grieve about having done something that cannot be undone) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't judge a book by its cover** (don't form an opinion about something based on appearance alone) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't judge a man until you've walked in his boots** (don't criticize a person until you've tried to do the things he does) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't look a gift horse in the mouth** (don't complain about something that is given to you)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Don't put all your eggs in one basket** (don't risk losing everything at once) \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today** (don't unnecessarily postpone doing something)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Don't put the cart before the horse** (don't do things in the wrong order) \_\_\_\_\_

## F

**Familiarity breeds contempt** (when you know people well you will discover their weaknesses and you may come to scorn them) \_\_\_\_\_

**The first step is always the hardest** (the most difficult part of accomplishing something is getting started) \_\_\_\_\_

**A fool and his money are soon parted** (a foolish person quickly spends his or her money on worthless things) \_\_\_\_\_

**Forewarned is forearmed** (being warned about something before it happens allows a person to prepare for it) \_\_\_\_\_

**A friend in need is a friend indeed** (a true friend will help you in a time of trouble) \_\_\_\_\_

**A friend who shares is a friend who cares** (a true friend unselfishly shares what he or she has) \_\_\_\_\_

## G

**Good things come in small packages** (small containers can hold objects of great value) \_\_\_\_\_

**The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence** (another place or situation always appears to be better than your own) \_\_\_\_\_

## H

**Haste makes waste** (when one hurries too much, one is likely to do a poor job and have to waste time doing it over) \_\_\_\_\_

**He who hesitates is lost** (a person who doesn't act decisively is unlikely to succeed) \_\_\_\_\_

**He who laughs last, laughs best** (the person who succeeds in making the last move has the most fun) \_\_\_\_\_

**Hindsight is better than foresight** (people see and understand things more clearly after they've happened than before they've happened) \_\_\_\_\_

## I

**If at first you don't succeed, try, try again** (persevere until you reach your goal) \_\_\_\_\_

**If you can't beat them, join them** (if you can't defeat your opponents, join forces with them) \_\_\_\_\_

**If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen** (if you can't tolerate the pressures of a particular situation, remove yourself from that situation) \_\_\_\_\_

**Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery** (trying to be like someone is the most genuine way of praising that person) \_\_\_\_\_

**In unity there is strength** (a group of people with the same goals can accomplish more than individuals can) \_\_\_\_\_

**It never rains but it pours** (good and bad things tend to happen in groups) \_\_\_\_\_

**It takes two to tango** (when two people work as a team, they are both responsible for the team's successes and failures) \_\_\_\_\_

## L

**Leave well enough alone** (don't try to improve something that is already satisfactory) \_\_\_\_\_

**A leopard cannot change his spots** (a person cannot change his or her basic character once it has been formed) \_\_\_\_\_

**Lightning never strikes twice in the same place** (the same misfortune won't happen twice to the same person) \_\_\_\_\_

**Look before you leap** (consider all aspects of a situation before you take any action) \_\_\_\_\_

**Love is blind** (one sees no faults in the person one loves) \_\_\_\_\_

**Love makes the world go round** (when people show respect and consideration for one another, the world is a better place) \_\_\_\_\_

## M

**Make hay while the sun shines** (take advantage of an opportunity to do something) \_\_\_\_\_

**Man does not live by bread alone** (people's psychological needs as well as their physical needs must be satisfied if they are to live) \_\_\_\_\_

**A man is known by the company he keeps** (a person is believed to be like the people with whom he or she spends time) \_\_\_\_\_

**Might makes right** (the stronger of two opponents will always control the situation) \_\_\_\_\_

**Misery loves company** (unhappy people often get satisfaction from having others share their misery) \_\_\_\_\_

**A miss is as good as a mile** (losing by a narrow margin is no different than losing by a wide margin) \_\_\_\_\_

**Money does not grow on trees** (money is not easily obtained) \_\_\_\_\_

## N

**Necessity is the mother of invention** (most inventions are created to solve a problem) \_\_\_\_\_

**No news is good news** (if one **does** not hear the outcome of a situation, that outcome must tie positive) \_\_\_\_\_

**No pain, no gain** (nothing can be accomplished without effort) \_\_\_\_\_

**Nothing hurts like the truth** (it is painful to discover an unpleasant truth about oneself) \_\_\_\_\_

**Nothing ventured, nothing gained** (you can't achieve anything if you don't try) \_\_\_\_\_

## O

**Old habits die hard** (it is **very** difficult to change an established pattern of behavior) \_\_\_\_\_

**One good turn deserves another** (a favor should be repaid with another favor) \_\_\_\_\_

**One man's gravy is another man's poison** (what is pleasing to one person may not be pleasing to another) \_\_\_\_\_

**One swallow does not a summer make** (one piece of evidence is not enough to prove something) \_\_\_\_\_

## P

**The pen is mightier than the sword** (the written word is more powerful than physical force) \_\_\_\_\_

**Possession is nine-tenths of the law** (the person who possesses something has the strongest claim to owning it) \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice makes perfect** (doing something many times improves one's skill at it) \_\_\_\_\_

**The proof of the pudding is in the eating** (the only way to judge something is to try it) \_\_\_\_\_

## R

**The road to hell is paved with good intentions** (good intentions don't always lead to good actions) \_\_\_\_\_

**Rome wasn't built in a day** (important things do not happen overnight) \_\_\_\_\_

## S

**The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak** (a person's body is not always as strong as his or her mind) \_\_\_\_\_

**The squeaking wheel gets the oil** (those who complain the loudest get the most attention) \_\_\_\_\_

**Strike while the iron is hot** (act at the best possible time) \_\_\_\_\_

## T

**There is no honor among thieves** (one dishonest person cannot trust another) \_\_\_\_\_

**There's more than one way to skin a cat** (there are many ways to achieve a goal) \_\_\_\_\_

**There's no fool like an old fool** (a foolish act seems even more foolish when performed by an older person, who should have a lot of wisdom) \_\_\_\_\_

**There's no place like home** (a person is happiest with his or her family and friends) \_\_\_\_\_

**Too many chiefs, not enough Indians** (too many people are giving orders, and not enough people are following orders) \_\_\_\_\_

**Too many cooks spoil the broth** (too many people trying to take care of something can ruin it) \_\_\_\_\_

**Two heads are better than one** (two people working together can solve a problem quicker and better than a person working alone) \_\_\_\_\_

**Two's company, but three's a crowd** (couples often enjoy their privacy and dislike having a third person around) \_\_\_\_\_

## V

**Variety is the spice of life** (differences and changes make life enjoyable) \_\_\_\_\_

## W

**The way to a man's heart is through his stomach** (the way to gain a man's love is by preparing food that he enjoys) \_\_\_\_\_

**When in Rome do as the Romans do** (when traveling, follow the customs of the local people) \_\_\_\_\_

**When the cat's away the mice will play** (some people will misbehave when they are not being watched) \_\_\_\_\_

**Where there's smoke, there's fire** (when there is evidence of a problem, there probably is a problem) \_\_\_\_\_

## Y

**You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink** (you can propose a course of action to someone, but you can't force that person to accept it) \_\_\_\_\_

**You can't have your cake and eat it too** (you can't enjoy the advantages of two conflicting activities at once) \_\_\_\_\_

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks** (elderly people can't change their behavior or learn anything new) \_\_\_\_\_

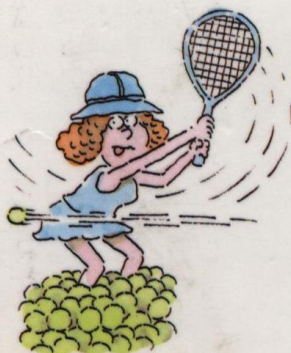
**You have to take the good with the bad** (you must accept disappointment along with success) \_\_\_\_\_

**You reap what you sow** (the amount of effort you put into something determines how much you will get out of it) \_\_\_\_\_

**You're never too old to learn** (a person can learn at any age) \_\_\_\_\_

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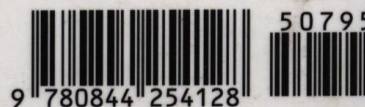
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# 101 American English Idioms

Harry Collis

Illustrated by Mario Risso



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# Foreword

Nonnative speakers of English can reach a point in their knowledge of the language where they feel comfortable with standard literary speech; however, they're liable to find themselves in hot water when confronted with idiomatic expressions. When hearing an idiom or colloquialism they may feel frustrated and confused, since the true meaning of the idiom generally cannot be determined by a knowledge of its component parts. In many cases an attempt on the part of the learner to tie down a definition of an idiom that would work in all instances is a futile undertaking.

When used by native speakers, idioms sound natural and fit the occasion, since Americans instinctively feel the imagery and impact of what they are saying. A nonnative speaker of English, on the other hand, may know the basic meaning of such expressions as "I gave it my best shot" or "dressed to kill," but still not be able to use them appropriately. For example, if at a formal gathering an American says to the wife of a foreign diplomat that her gown is elegant, or that she looks lovely, and in appreciation for the compliment her answer is, "Thank you, I gave it my best shot!" or "Thanks, I dressed to kill!", the chances are that the American would be trying his hardest to hold back peals of laughter. Even with a fairly accurate idea of the meaning of an idiomatic expression, the nonnative lacks the intuitive feel for its impact or for the "picture" it creates.

**101 American English Idioms** is designed to help bridge the gap between "meaning" and "thrust" of American colloquialisms by providing a situation and a graphic illustration of that situation, so that the imagery created by the expression can be felt, rather than simply learned as a stock definition.

The book is divided into nine sections. The title of each section reflects a notion or a manifestation of the physical world, the world of behavior, or the world of the senses with which the reader may easily identify.

It is hoped that the natural tone of the language of the situations in which the idiom is presented will help to convey the *feeling* of the idiom and the circumstances under which it may be used. The illustrations graphically depicting the meaning of the components of the expressions not only add an element of humor, but also serve to highlight the contrast between the literal and actual meaning of the idioms as presented in the text.

An index is included to facilitate recall and location of the expressions.

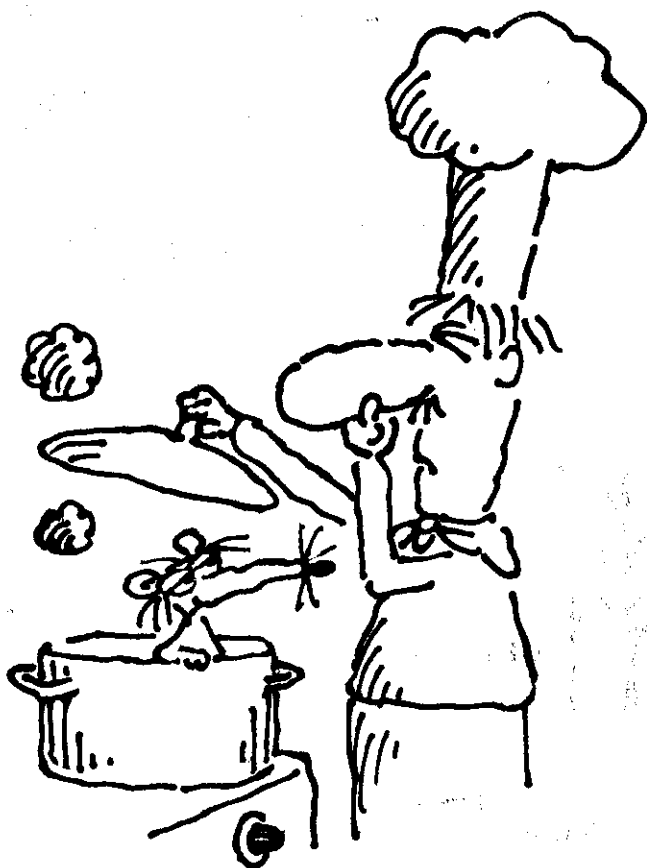
**101 American English Idioms** is intended primarily for all students of English. Nevertheless, because of the graphic humor of the idioms in caricature, native speakers of English will also find the book refreshingly entertaining.

Section One

# **It's a Zoo Out There**



# Smell a Rat



**(feel that something is wrong)**

---

How come the front door is open? Didn't you close it before we went shopping?

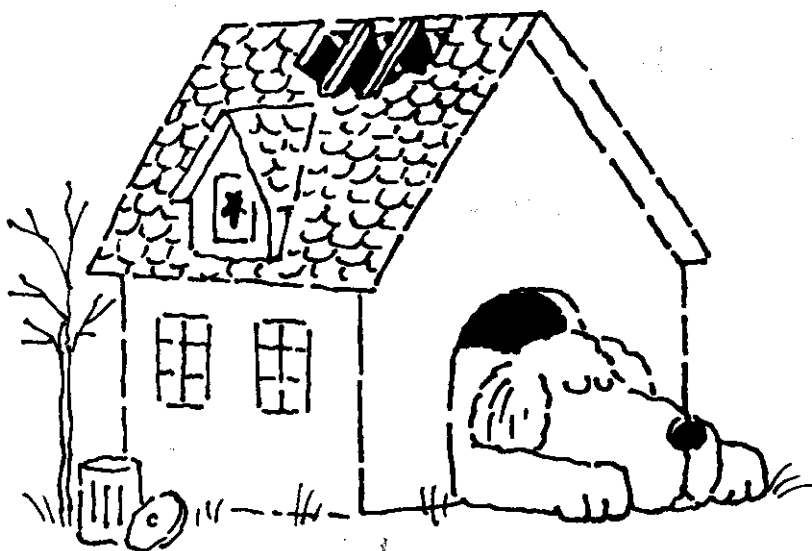
I'm sure I did. I can't understand it.

Frankly, I **smell a rat**.

Me, too. I'm **convinced that something is definitely wrong** here.

We'd better call the police.

# Go to the Dogs



**(become run-down)**

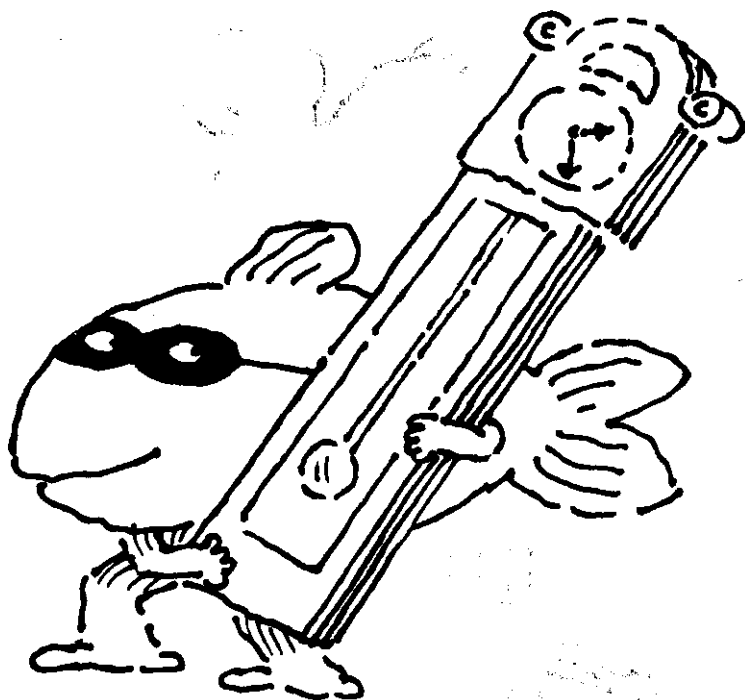
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Have you seen their house lately? It's really **gone to the dogs**.

It's true that it has **become run-down and in serious need of repair**, but I'm sure that it can be fixed up to look like new.

I guess with a little carpentry work and some paint it could look pretty decent.

# Fishy

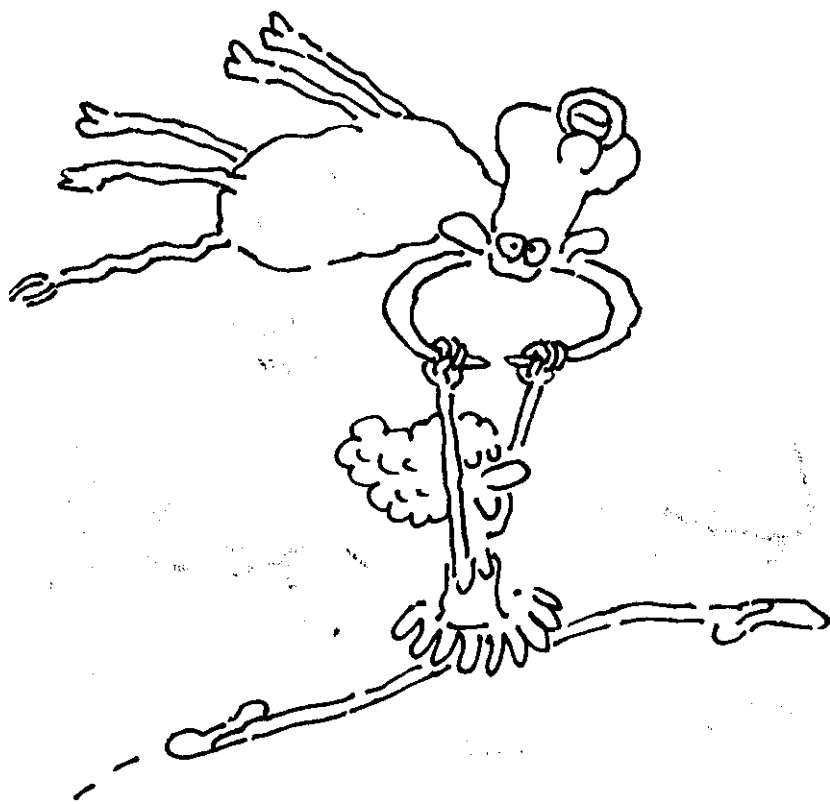


(strange and suspicious)

---

When the security guard saw a light in the store after closing hours, it seemed to him that there was something **fishy** going on. He called the central office and explained to his superior that he thought something **strange and suspicious** was occurring.

# Take the Bull by the Horns



.. (take decisive action in a difficult situation)

---

Julie had always felt that she was missing out on a lot of fun because of her clumsiness on the dance floor. She had been putting off taking lessons, but she finally **took the bull by the horns** and went to a professional dance studio for help. She was tired of feeling left out and **acted decisively to correct the situation.**



# Horse of a Different Color



**(quite a different matter)**

---

Eric likes to play jokes on his friends, but he makes sure that nobody is hurt by any of his pranks. A prank that hurts someone is a **horse of a different color**! Being playful is one thing, but hurting someone by one's prank is **quite a different matter**.

# Let the Cat Out of the Bag

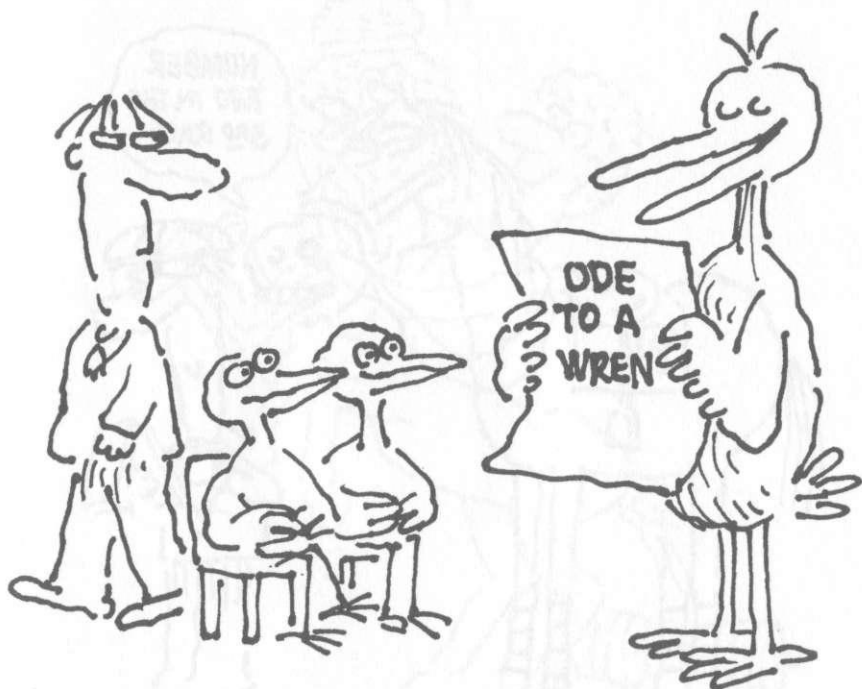


**(inform beforehand)**

---

Bob was going to retire from teaching in June, and the foreign language department was planning on presenting him with some luggage at his retirement dinner. He wasn't supposed to know about it, but someone **let the cat out of the bag**. At the dinner Bob acted surprised, even though someone **had told him what he was getting before the official presentation**.

# For the Birds

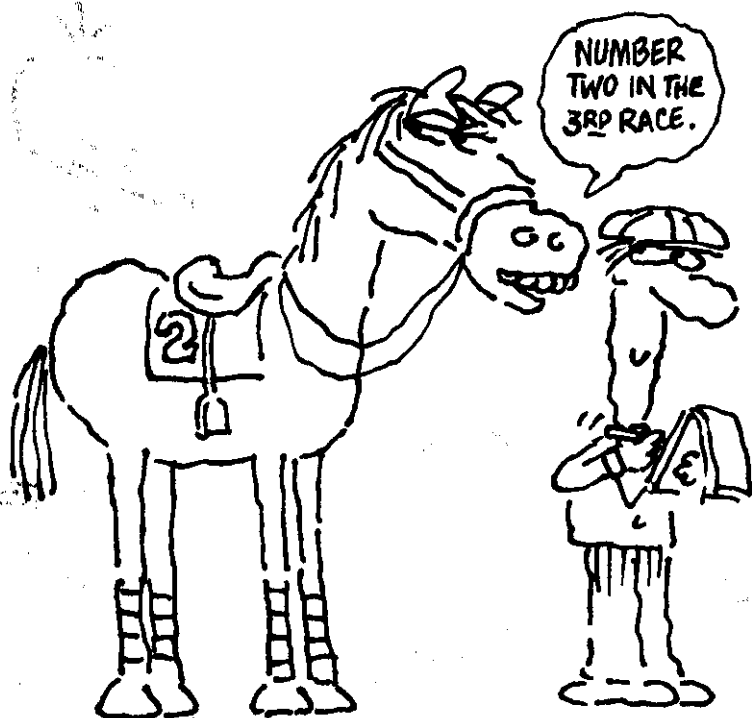


**(uninteresting and meaningless)**

---

They went to a poetry reading, but they got bored and restless. As far as they were concerned, it was **for the birds**! They left during an intermission because they found the reading **totally uninteresting and meaningless**.

# Straight From the Horse's Mouth



(from a reliable source)

---

How did you find out that Jill was engaged?

I got the information **from a very reliable source.**

You mean Jill told you so herself?

That's right. I got it **straight from the horse's mouth!**

# Horse Around



(play around)

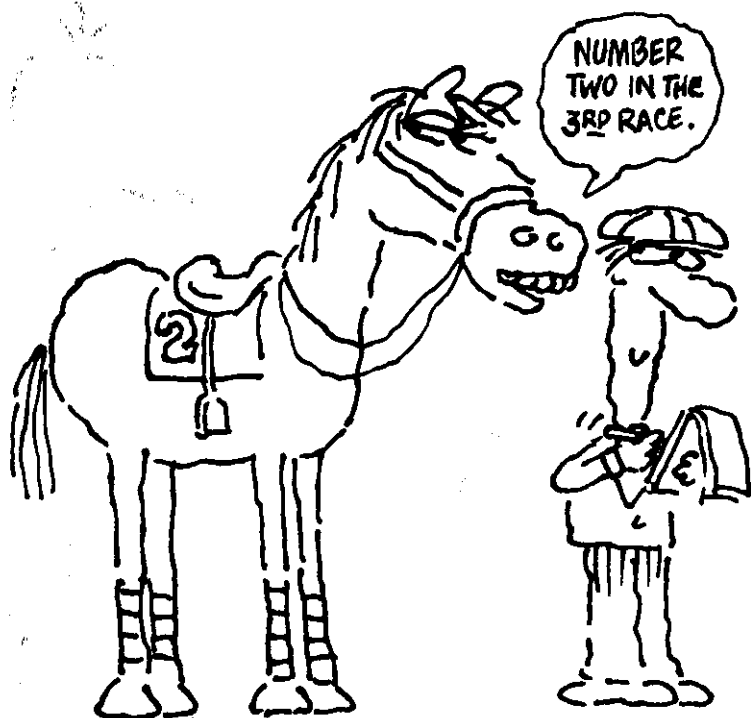
Did you hear about Dave's back injury?

No. How did he get hurt?

Well, after the coach left the gym he decided to stay and **horse around** on the parallel bars. He somehow lost his grip and fell on his back.

That's too bad, but he shouldn't have been **aimlessly playing around** on the equipment without proper supervision.

# Straight From the Horse's Mouth



(from a reliable source)

---

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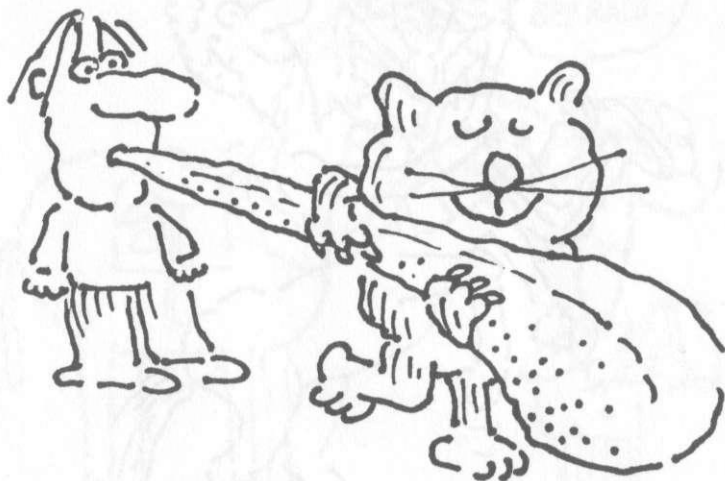
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That's too bad, but he shouldn't have been **aimlessly playing around** on the equipment without proper supervision.

# Cat Got Your Tongue?



(can't talk?)

---

Come on, Connie! Tell us what you think about our little ride down the rapids yesterday.

Well, uh...

Wasn't it exciting?

I, uh...

What's the matter? **Cat got your tongue?**

If you must know, I'm **keeping quiet** because I was scared out of my wits!



# The Body Has Many Uses



# Get in Someone's Hair



(bother someone)

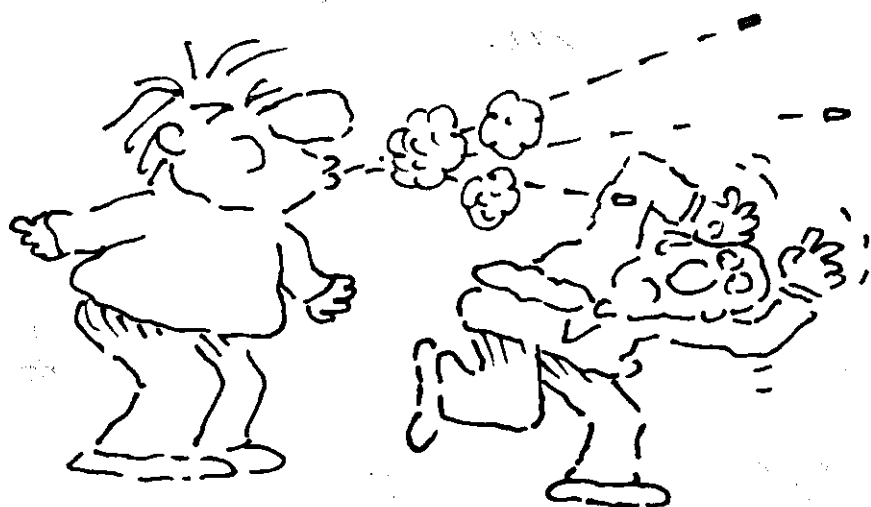
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Children! Would you please stop making so much noise!  
And for heaven's sake, pick up your clothes and toys!  
It's hard enough trying to keep this house clean  
without your throwing your things all over the  
place!

Clara, I know that the children **get in your hair**, but  
you should try not to let it upset you so much.

Listen, Jim. I can't help it. The children **bother me and  
make me very angry** when they're so noisy and  
messy.

# Shoot Off One's Mouth



**(express one's opinions loudly)**

---

Jim doesn't play tennis very much, but he's always **shooting off his mouth** about how good he is. Yet he's fooling nobody. Jim is somewhat of a braggart and everyone knows that he gives opinions without knowing all the facts and **talks as if he knew everything** about the game.

# Jump Down Someone's Throat



(become angry with someone)

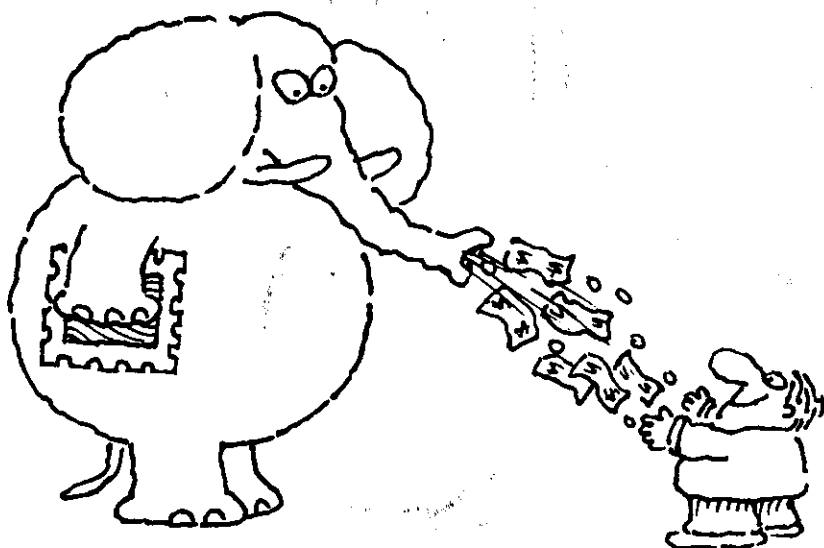
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That's it, Greg! You'd better not come in after midnight again tonight!

I know, dad. You don't have to **jump down my throat!** I told you that I'd make it home around 11:30. I don't intend to be late!

Well, you've said that before and in you come at 2:30 in the morning. You can't blame me for **getting angry and scolding you.** I've got good reason.

# Pay Through the Nose



(pay too high a price)

---

At last Mr. Smith came upon the rare stamp he had been seeking at an auction. Since many other stamp collectors would also be bidding for it, he realized that he would have to **pay through the nose** in order to have it. After considering the increasing value of the stamp, he decided that he would not mind **paying such a high price** for something so rare.

# Tongue-In-Cheek



(not serious)

---

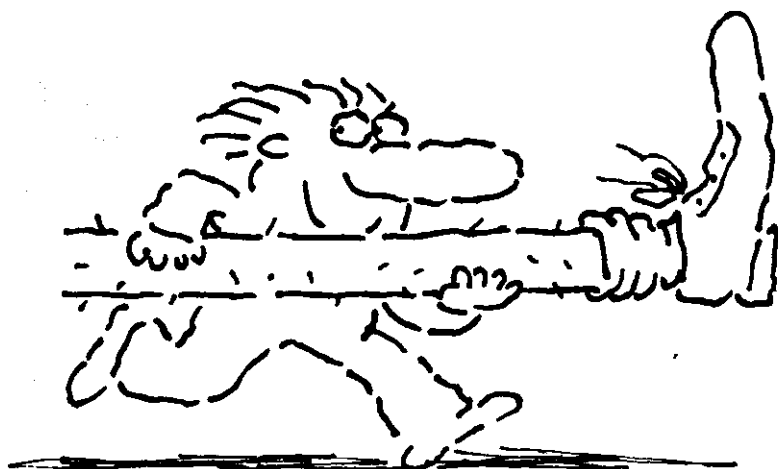
Why were you teasing Sonia about her new hairdo? She really took offense at what you said.

I didn't mean to offend her. I was simply making a **tongue-in-cheek** remark when I said that it was too elaborate for a girl of her young, tender age.

Well, she thought you were serious. She had no idea that you were just saying that **as a joke**.

I'm really sorry. I suppose I owe her an apology.

# Pull Someone's Leg



(fool someone)

---

Hey, Al. I was invited to be a judge for the Miss America Beauty Pageant!

Oh, really? Come on, you're **pulling my leg!**

No, honestly. Do you really think that I'm **trying to fool you with a ridiculous story?**

Well, you've told me foolish stories before.

I can assure you that this one is for real.



# Play It by Ear



**(improvise as one goes along)**

---

Let's go to the movies, agreed?

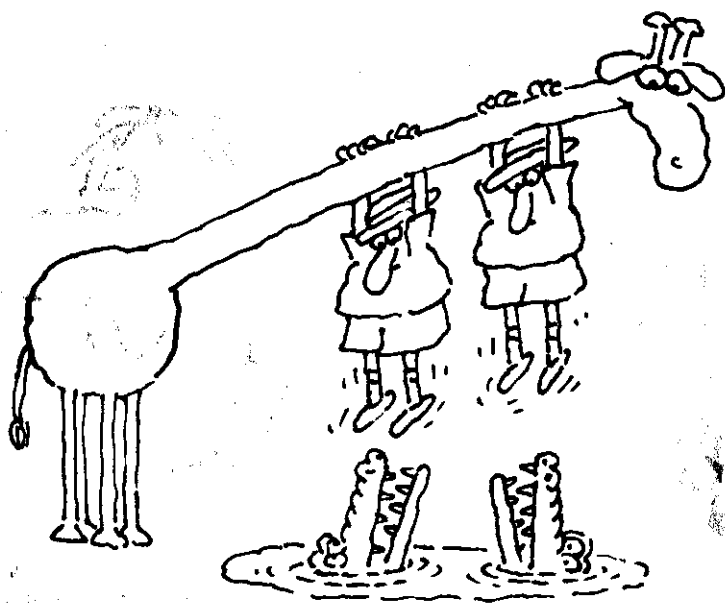
Sure. And what'll we do after that?

Oh, I don't know. Let's **play it by ear**.

Well, I would like to have a more definite plan of action.

Don't be like that. It's always more fun **not knowing what to expect and deciding what to do as we go along**.

# Stick Out One's Neck



**(take a risk)**

How come they're asking me to act as their guide through the jungle?

Evidently they think you're the only one who can lead them to the lost temple.

That jungle has danger lurking around every corner.

Why should I **stick my neck out** for them? They didn't pay me for my services.

They know that you would be **taking a great risk and could possibly get hurt**, but you're the only one with enough knowledge to take them to their destination. I'm sure you'll be amply rewarded.

# Shake a Leg



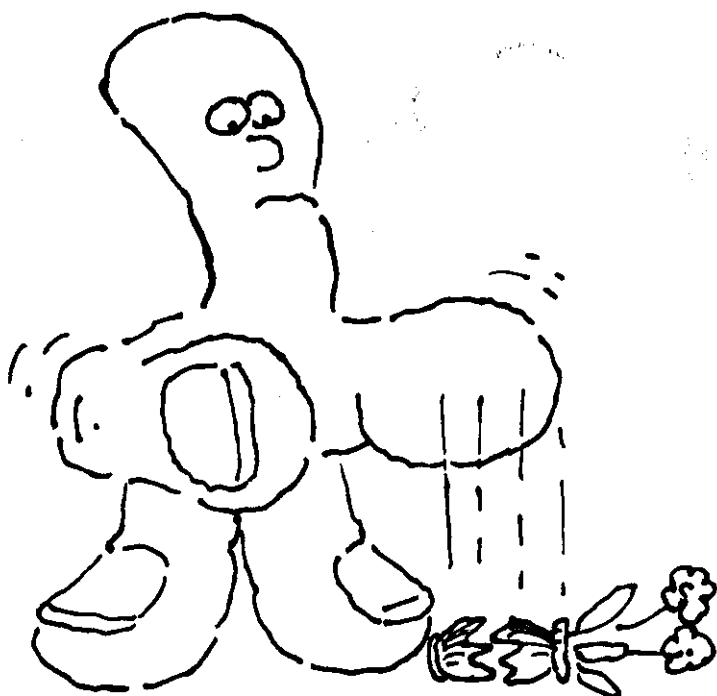
(hurry!)

Mary, you always take such a long time to put on your makeup. Come on, **shake a leg!**

I'll be finished in a minute. Be patient.

You've got to **hurry** or else we won't arrive on time to see the last show.

# All Thumbs



(clumsy)

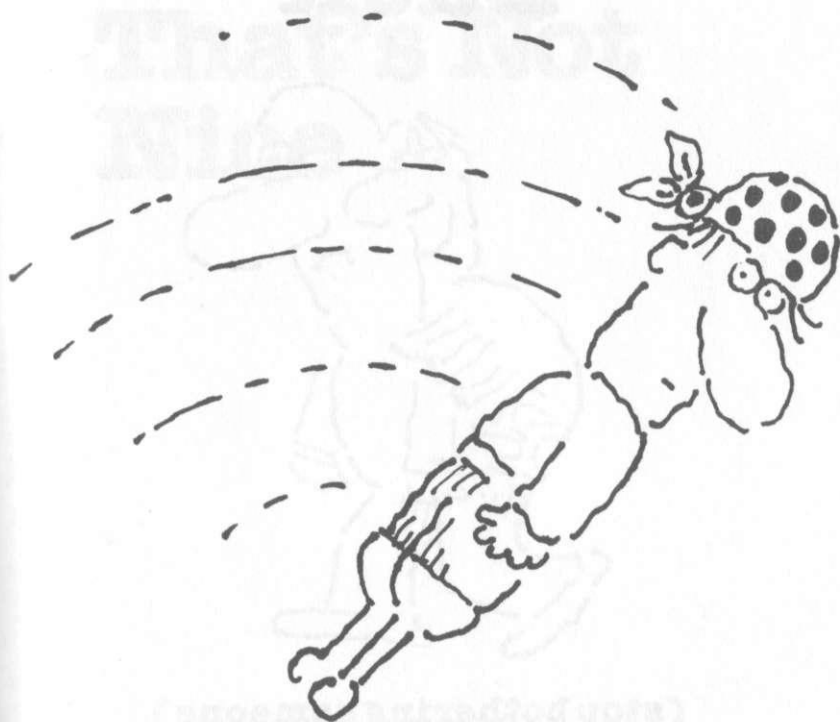
Hey, Bea. Can you help me out? I don't seem to be able to button up the back of my dress.

Sure. Let's see if I can do it for you.

I guess I'm **all thumbs** because I'm so nervous. I'm already late for my date.

Well, I suppose that being so nervous would make you **clumsy and awkward**. But don't worry. I'm sure your date will wait.

# Not Have a Leg to Stand On



(to have no good defense  
for one's opinions or actions)

Tom maintains that the firm owes him some back wages for having worked overtime. However, he **won't have a leg to stand on** unless he can prove that he put in all those extra hours. He doesn't stand a chance of getting his money **without a strong foundation of facts to support his position**.

# Get Off Someone's Back



**(stop bothering someone)**

---

Hey, John. I'm bored. Come on, let's go out and do something.

Sorry, I'm right in the middle of studying for a physics exam. I won't be able to make it tonight.

You've been studying for a long time. Why don't you take a break? Come on! Let's go! Forget studying for a while!

Look! **Get off my back!** I can't go anywhere!

OK. I'll **stop bothering you** only if you promise to let me know the minute you're finished.

# That's Not Nice





# Drive Someone Up a Wall



(annoy someone greatly)

Wow! What a great set of drums!

Yeah, they're great, but I can't play on them when my folks are at home. They say I **drive them up a wall** with all the loud banging.

I get the same thing at home. My folks tell me that I **annoy them and get them really angry** whenever I turn up the volume on my stereo.

# String Someone Along



**(lead someone on dishonestly)**

Liz had high hopes of marrying Dean. When he ran off with another woman, she realized that he was just **stringing her along**. She had felt very strongly about him and was really hurt to see that he was **deceiving her** and had no intentions of ever marrying her.

# Sell Someone Down the River



(betray someone)

I heard that poor Jud landed up in jail.

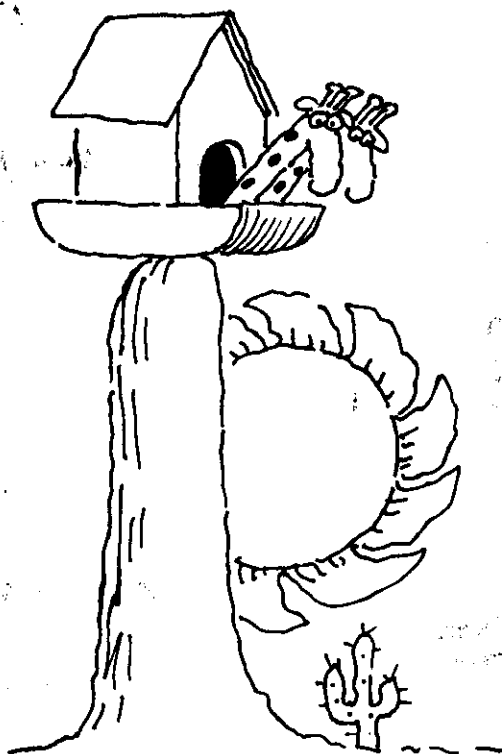
Yeah. His so-called girlfriend **sold him down the river** and claimed the reward on him.

I can't understand that. I thought she was devoted to him.

She couldn't have been very devoted to him if she **betrayed him and informed the police** about his hiding place.

That just goes to show you what people will do for money.

# Leave Someone High and Dry



**(abandon someone)**

Say, Jill. I thought that John was going to help you do the dishes tonight.

So did I. But he **left me high and dry**.

Where did he go?

Well, he got a call from some of his pals at work to go bowling, and he **left me alone to do all this work without any help at all!**

# Sell Someone Short



**(underestimate someone)**

---

Just because he does not say very much is no reason to **sell him short**. Actually, he's a profound thinker and a most talented writer. People tend to **underestimate him and not give him the credit he deserves** because they think he's shy.

# Snow Job



(insincere talk)

---

The salesman tried to convince a group of investors that the properties he was selling would soon be worth much more money than he was asking. However, no one bought anything from him because they felt he was giving them a **snow job**. No one was deceived by his **insincerity and exaggerated claims** about the worth of the properties.

# Spill the Beans



(reveal a secret)

Did you know that Harry was going to take Kathy on a Caribbean cruise?

Yes, I did. He was planning on surprising her with the tickets for their anniversary, but someone **spilled the beans**.

What a shame! That was supposed to have been a surprise.

Yes, it's too bad that someone **told her about the trip beforehand** and ruined Harry's surprise.

That's OK. Her enthusiasm was not dampened in the least!

# Feed Someone a Line



(deceive someone)

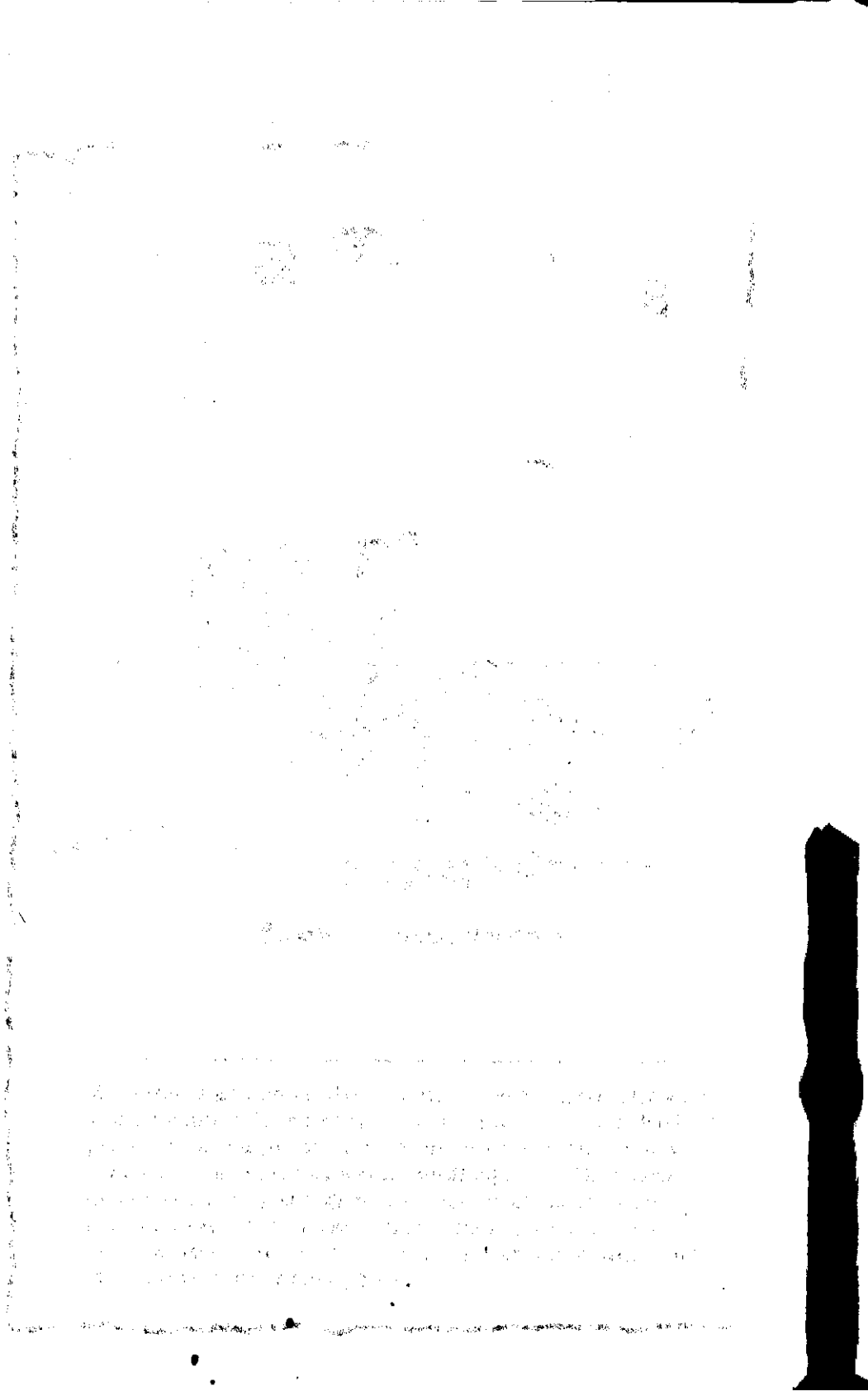
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Mr. Jones had been telling Louise how efficient she was and how much he admired her work at the office. He had promised her a promotion in the near future, but she soon discovered that he was **feeding her a line** when he passed her by and gave the promotion to someone less capable. Louise was acutely disappointed to find out that Mr. Jones was **not telling her the truth, and that he was deceiving her.**

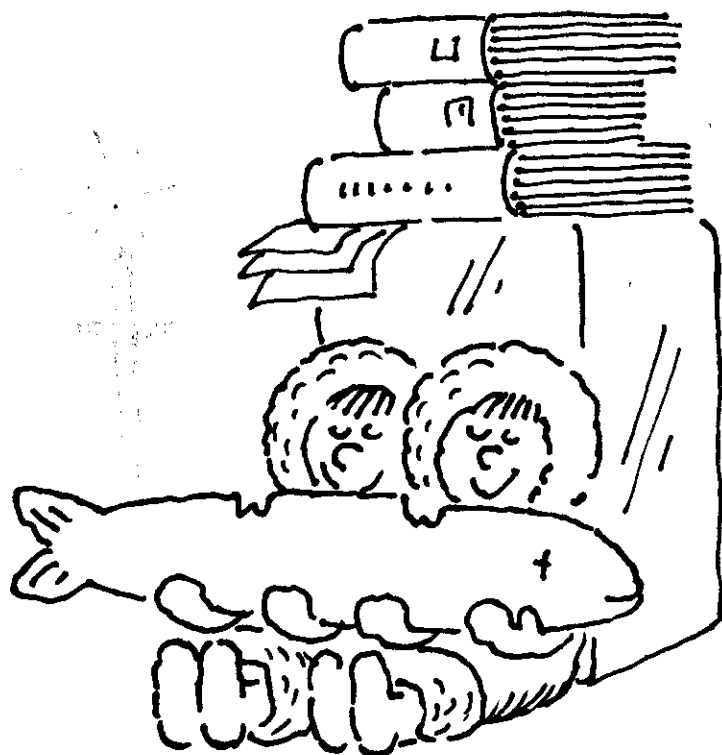


# People Do the Strangest Things





# On Ice



(set aside for future use)

---

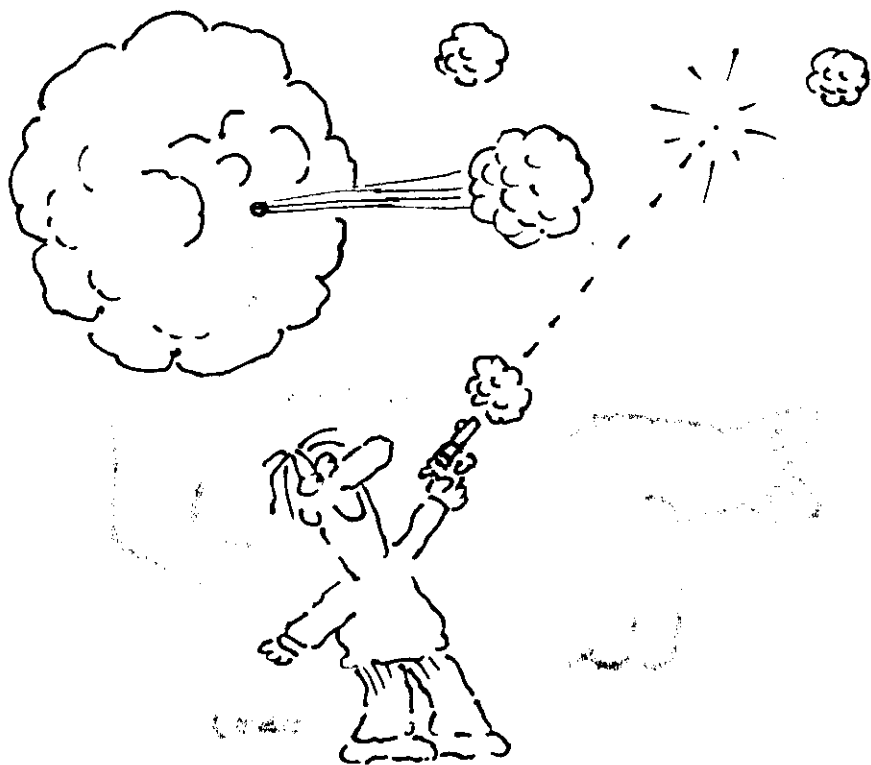
We've been working on this sales report for some time now. Don't you think we should take a break for some dinner?

Now that you mention it, I am kind of hungry. Let's put the report **on ice** awhile and grab a bite to eat.

That's fine. I'd be happy to **stop working on it and set it aside** until we get some food.

Great! Let's lock up and go.

# Shoot the Breeze



(chat informally)

---

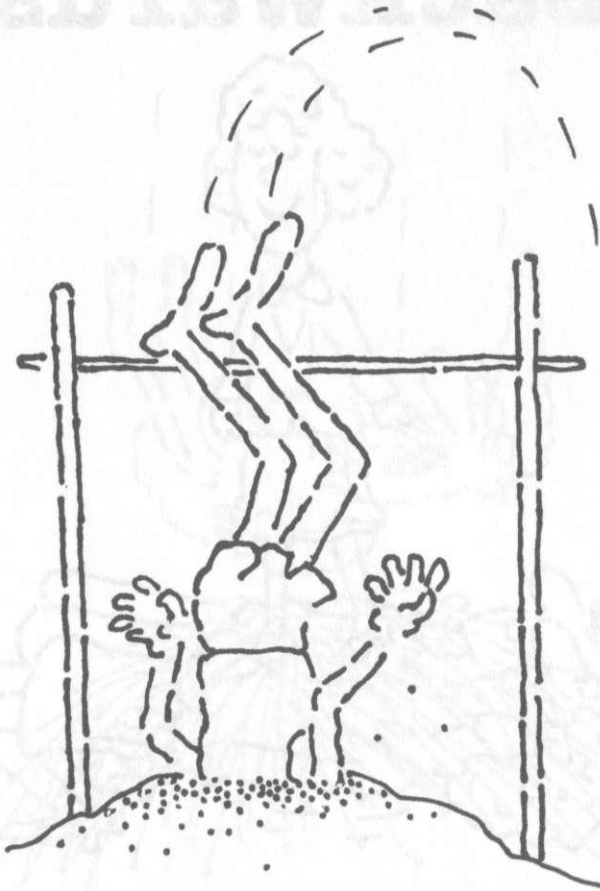
What are you going to be doing this afternoon?

Oh, I don't have anything in particular in mind.

Why don't you come over to my place? We can listen to some records and **shoot the breeze**.

That sounds OK to me. I'd like to relax listening to music and **visit and chat informally** until my folks get back from shopping.

# Bite the Dust



(go down in defeat)

Andy did exceptionally well in all of the track events, but he **bit the dust** in the high jump competition. Much to the disappointment of his fans, he **went down in defeat, losing to a competitor** from the visiting team.

# Bend Over Backwards



(try very hard)

---

When Joan first started teaching she was afraid that she would have a lot of trouble getting used to the kids and to the faculty. Her fears turned out to be unfounded, since everybody **bent over backwards** to help her. Everyone **tried very hard** to help her feel comfortable and adjust to the school.

# Hit the Hay



(go to bed)

---

Listen, Kim. We're going to be really busy with moving tomorrow, and we've got to get an early start. I guess you're right. We'll need all the rest we can get. What do you say we **hit the hay** now? Agreed. Let's **go to bed** and get a good night's sleep. It's going to be a long day.

# Cough Up



(give unwillingly)

---

Say, Greg. Did you finally get that computer that you wanted so much?

Not yet. I needed to raise a couple of hundred dollars more.

Is it going to take you a while to raise the money?

It would have taken me forever, but dad said he'd **cough up** the money I need since I'm going to be using the computer for my school work.

Maybe it was **difficult for your dad to give** you the money—but then, he knows that it's for a good cause.



# Jump the Gun



(to be hasty)

Denise was planning on telling her grandparents that the doctor said she was going to have twins, but when her dad found out he **jumped the gun** and told them before Denise could say a word. He was so excited that he **became hasty** and revealed the news before Denise had a chance to tell them.

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# Scratch Someone's Back



(return a favor)

---

Hey, Bea. I need some help stacking these boxes. Would you please give me a hand?

OK. And I need some help tidying up the house. How about your helping me out after that?

OK. If you **scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.**

I know you don't like doing housework, but I'll **help you with the boxes if you promise to return the favor.**

No problem. I'll even do the windows.

# Hit the Ceiling



(become very angry)

Don's father **hit the ceiling** when he was informed that his son had been detained by the police for disorderly conduct. He **became violently angry**, since he had often warned his son not to keep company with that group of boys.

# Fork Over



(hand over, give)

---

Hey, Dan. How come you're looking so sad?

It's nothing, really. I unexpectedly bumped into Ralph and he asked me to **fork over** the ten bucks I owed him.

Did he expect you to pay him back right then and there? Yes, he did. It was all the money I had, and I had to **hand it over** to him.

Don't complain. After all, he did you a favor by lending it to you in the first place.

# Turn Someone Off



(disgust someone)

---

How was your date with Marty last night?  
Well, it started off OK, but he really **turned me off** when  
we went for a snack after the movies.  
Did he say or do something to annoy you?  
Frankly, he **disgusted me** when he tried to talk with  
his mouth full.  
I don't blame you. That would have really bothered me  
too.

# Go Fly a Kite



**(go away!)**

---

For the past three hours Jerry had been trying to convince Linda to go to the art exhibition with him. She had been refusing all along and finally in desperation she told him, "**Go fly a kite!**" Jerry didn't like to be told to **go away in such a forceful manner**. Nevertheless, he finally stopped trying to get Linda to attend the exhibition.



# Kick the Bucket



(die)

---

It's been said that the old man knew of a buried treasure, but he **kicked the bucket** before telling anyone where it was. If the treasure exists, the old man unfortunately took the secret of its location with him when he **died**.

# Raise a Stink



(protest strongly)

---

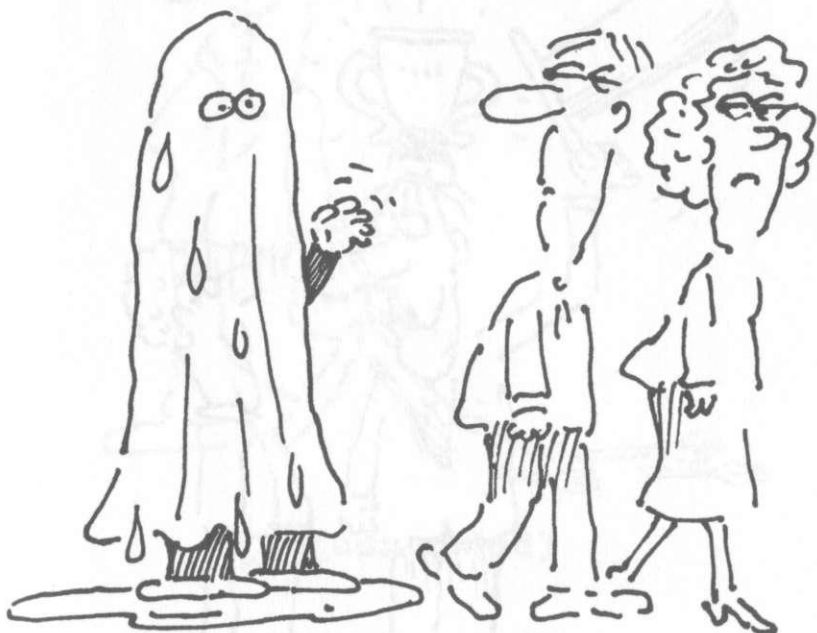
Listen! Don't try to use any of your sister's clothes without asking her first. She's liable to **raise a stink** if she finds something missing.

I'm sure that there will be no problem. She's borrowed some of my things before, and I've never said anything. I really doubt that she will **protest very strongly**.

# Clothes Make the Man (and Woman)



# Wet Blanket



(dull or boring person who  
spoils the happiness of others)

---

James was not invited to go on the outing with the rest of the group because he's such a **wet blanket**. On many previous occasions he has **kept others from enjoying themselves by his pessimism and lack of enthusiasm**. It's understandable that no one wants him around.

# Keep Under One's Hat



**(keep something a secret)**

---

Although the contestants were most anxious to know who won the prizes in the piano competition, the judges **kept the results under their hats**. They **kept the results a secret** so that the formal announcements could be made in public at the awards ceremony.

# Up One's Sleeve



(concealed)

---

All right, Sara. We know that you're planning something big for Jean-Paul's birthday. Mind telling us just what you have **up your sleeve**?

I wanted to make his birthday a very special event. Jean-Paul has a sister living in France, and I sent her an airplane ticket so that she could be here for his birthday.

Boy! That is something special! We kind of guessed that you had some **concealed plan** and were waiting for the right time to reveal it.

Well, I didn't want to say anything until I was sure she could come.

# Dressed to Kill



(wear one's finest clothing)

---

The reception for the new Swedish ambassador at the Jennison's was quite lavish. Naturally, everybody was **dressed to kill**. Since it was a formal occasion, everyone was **dressed in their finest, most elegant clothes**.



# Give Someone the Slip

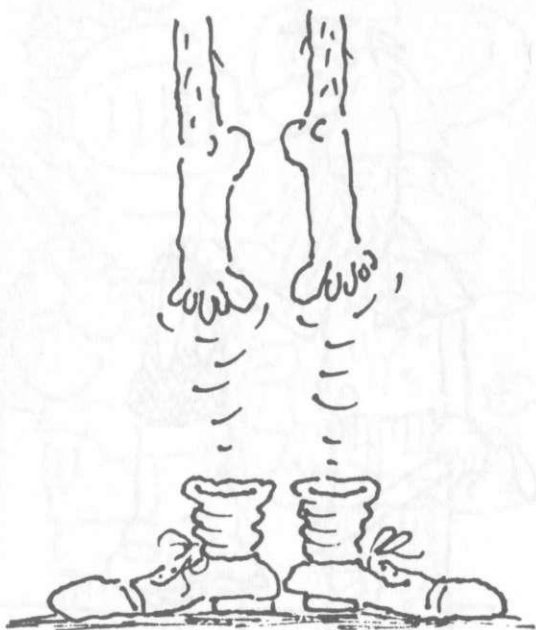


(make a getaway)

---

The police were chasing the thief through the streets of the city, but he managed to **give them the slip**. No wonder. There were so many people around that the thief managed to **escape** by getting lost in the crowds.

# Knock Someone's Socks Off



(enthuse and excite)

---

Hi, John. What's new?

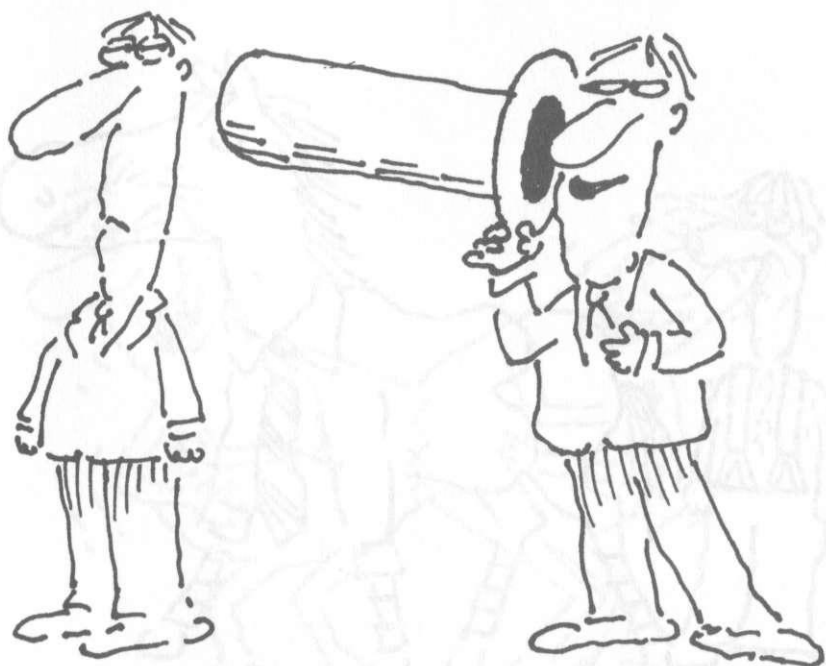
Oh, nothing too much with me, but you ought to see Alfredo's new car. It'll **knock your socks off**!

So, he finally got that Italian sports car he's been dreaming about.

He sure did! When you see all the custom features that it has, you'll **get so enthused and excited** you won't know what to do!

Boy, I can hardly wait to go for a ride in it!

# Talk Through One's Hat



(make foolish statements)

We were discussing ethnic traditions and customs with Fred the other day, and he showed just how little he knew about other cultures.

What do you mean?

Well, he said that as far as he could tell, there wasn't much difference in behavior and temperament between the English and the Hispanics.

It's plain to see that he was **talking through his hat!**

True, but Fred thinks he's an authority on everything.

It was difficult to convince him that he was talking ignorantly. He's got a reputation for **making foolish, inaccurate statements.**

# Lose One's Shirt



(lose a great deal of money)

---

I happened to bump into Doug at lunch yesterday afternoon.

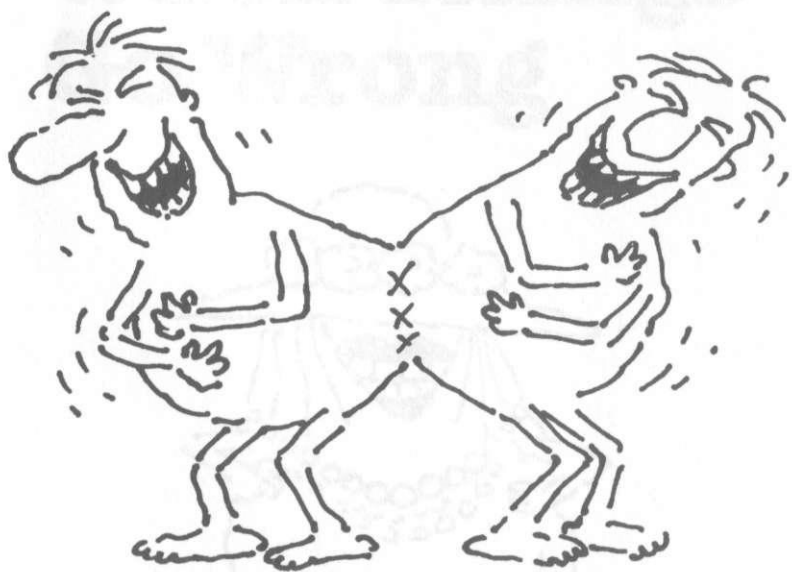
What's new with Doug these days?

He wasn't doing so well. For one thing, he told me he **lost his shirt** at the races.

Doug has always liked to bet on the horses. I'm not surprised that he **lost a great deal of money**.

Yeah. At this rate he'll never have a penny to his name!

# In Stitches



(laughing very hard)

---

Danny was hilarious at the party the other night. He had us all **in stitches**! I didn't realize that he was such a comedian.

He's always been funny, but last night he outdid himself. He had us **laughing so hard that it hurt our sides**.

# Dressed to the Teeth



(dressed elegantly)

---

Did you see Hilda at the party last night?  
Yes, I did. She was really **dressed to the teeth!**  
Well, she **had on her finest, most elegant clothing**  
because she was out to make a good impression  
on Bill.

# When Things Go Wrong





# Lemon



(something defective)

---

Have you seen Joanne's new car yet?  
Yeah. It looks good, but she's had nothing but problems with it.  
That's too bad. It sounds like she got a real **lemon**.  
She sure did! No sooner did she drive it home from the dealer's than it **proved defective and started breaking down**.

# Out of the Woods



(out of danger)

Although Eric was well on his way to recovering from his bout with pneumonia, he was still not **out of the woods**. The doctors told him that he would have to take it easy and avoid exposure to cold, since he was not **out of danger and difficulty** yet.

# Get Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed



**(wake up in a bad mood)**

What's the matter with Bernard today? He started shouting from the moment he stepped into the office.

I don't know. He usually doesn't act that way at all. I guess he **got up on the wrong side of the bed**.

Just because he **woke up in a bad mood** is no reason for him to be so cross and to go around shouting at everybody.

Hopefully he'll relax as the day goes on.

Amen!

# Out on a Limb

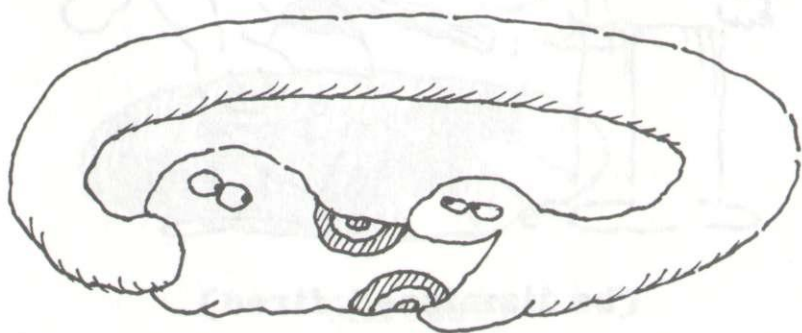


(in a risky position)

---

The members of the committee realized that their position against expanding the student aid program was an unpopular one, and that they were going **out on a limb** by voting against the program. Nevertheless, their position was justified to a certain extent. Although they knew that they were placing themselves **in a risky position**, they felt that other budgetary considerations were of greater urgency.

# Eating Someone



**(bothering or worrying someone)**

---

Hey, Alice. What's been **eating you** lately? Don't you realize how rude and irritable you've become?  
I know. I'm really sorry for the way I've been acting.  
Well, why don't you tell me what has been **bothering and upsetting you** and maybe we can work your problem out together.  
I'll admit that it would help to talk to someone about it.

# Get the Ax



**(be dismissed, fired)**

---

I feel sorry for Richard. He was feeling quite depressed when I ran into him.

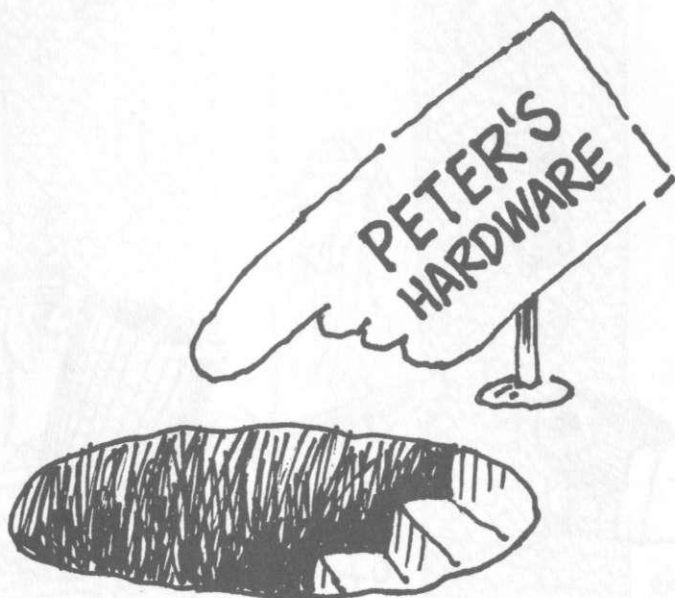
Did he tell you what was bothering him?

Among other things, he informed me that he **got the ax** at work.

That's strange. He's always been a conscientious worker. I wonder why they **dismissed him from his job**?

Evidently he had a disagreement on company policies with one of the top executives.

# In the Hole



(in debt)

---

Unfortunately, Peter had to sell his neighborhood hardware store. Because of competition from the bigger stores in the shopping center, he was going **in the hole** every month. His store was small and did not generate enough income to meet expenses. As a consequence, he was rapidly **losing money and going into debt**.

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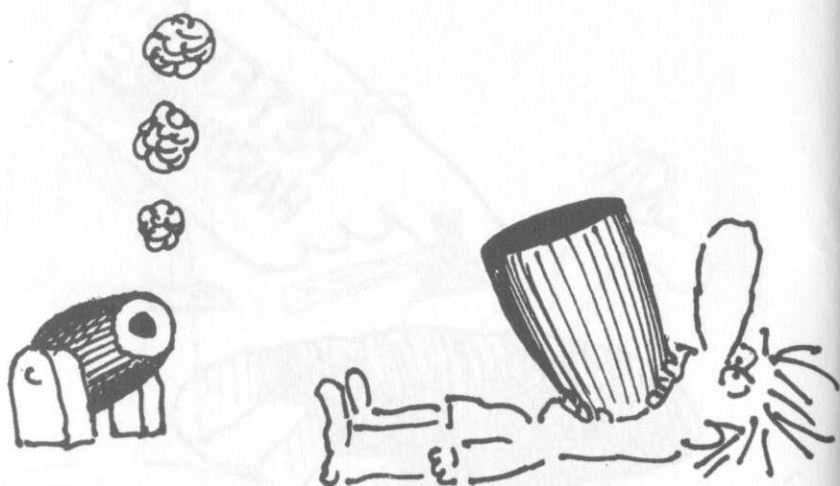


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# Bite the Bullet



**(endure in a difficult situation)**

---

We really had a frightening experience when we went hunting last month.

What happened?

We got lost in the wilderness and had to **bite the bullet** until help arrived.

Did you manage OK?

Barely. We weren't prepared for the cold weather and we couldn't find any shelter. We had to **endure in a very trying situation**. We almost froze by the time they found us.

# Face the Music



(accept the consequences)

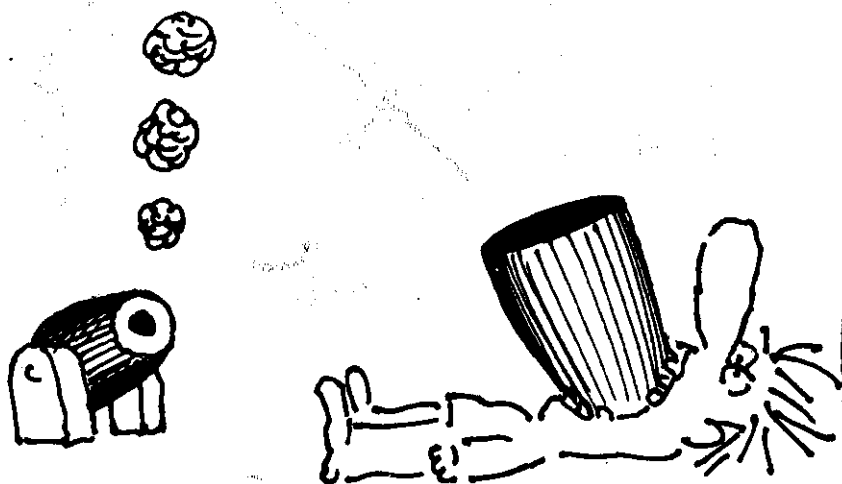
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It's no wonder you have a stomachache. I told you not to eat so many green apples. You don't listen, and now you're going to have to **face the music**.

The trouble with me is that I can't stop with just one or two, especially when they're so tart. I'll admit that I tend to forget that eventually I'm going to have to **accept the consequences for what I've done**.

I sure hope it was worth it!

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# Blow It



(fail at something)

---

How did you do on the history exam?

I think I **blew it**! There was a section on the Civil War, and that's the chapter in the book that I studied the least.

Well, at this point you can't really be sure that you **completely failed** the examination. You must have done okay on the rest of the test.

Perhaps I didn't fail the entire exam, but I'm sure that I didn't do well.

# At the End of One's Rope

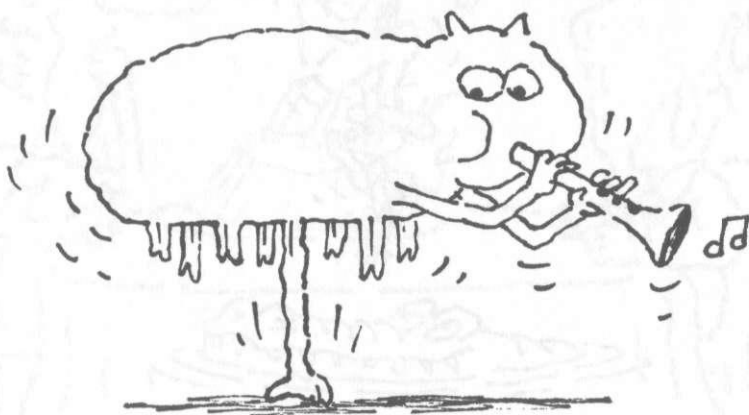


(at the limit of one's ability to cope)

---

The Jones's housekeeper was completely useless! Poor Mrs. Jones felt that she was **at the end of her rope** when she walked into the house and saw the children crying and unfed, dirty dishes in the sink, and clothes strewn all over the place. She had had to leave the house and children in someone else's care while she was off on business. Now that she came back to all of this disorder and disarray, she felt that she had reached **the limit of her ability to cope with the situation.**

# On One's Last Legs



(**sick and failing**)

---

Poor Mike. He was one of the greatest musicians I've ever known, but when I saw him the other day he looked like he was **on his last legs**.

Yeah. He hardly plays any more.

What made him give up his music?

Apparently he lost confidence in himself at some point in his career, and he's been **sick and failing** ever since.



# Hot Under the Collar



(**extremely angry**)

---

Did you see how Bill came in to work this morning?

Did I ever! Boy, was he **hot under the collar**!

What brought that on?

He said that he was **extremely angry** because he got stuck in slow-moving traffic and arrived late for an important business meeting.

# On the Line



**(in danger of being lost)**

---

Lately Tom's been more conscientious about the accuracy and quality of his work with the company. He was warned that his job was **on the line** because of his lack of concern for his duties. When Tom was alerted that he was **in danger of losing his job**, he began to take his obligations with the company more seriously.

Section Seven

# **When Things Go Well**



# For a Song



(for very little money)

---

Sara, I picked up the perfect chair for the living room the other day.

That's wonderful. I know you've been looking for some time. Where did you finally come across what you wanted?

I was really quite lucky. I got it **for a song** at a little furniture store. I was able to buy it **for very little money** because the owners of the store were right in the middle of their spring liquidation sale.

# Make a Splash



**(be successful and attract attention)**

---

Do you remember Andre and Jack?

Yes, I do. Weren't they working together on some kind of a novel?

That's right. It was finally published and I understand that it **made quite a splash** both domestically and abroad.

That's great news! They're both talented and hard-working. It's good to hear that the book was so **successful and attracted such a great deal of attention.**

# Have the World by the Tail



**(be successful and happy)**

Marc finished school at the top of his class and he was offered an excellent position with an accounting firm. Now he feels that he **has the world by the tail**. Everything has been working out for him lately, and it's no wonder that he's **feeling so successful and happy**.

# Sitting Pretty



(in a fortunate position)

---

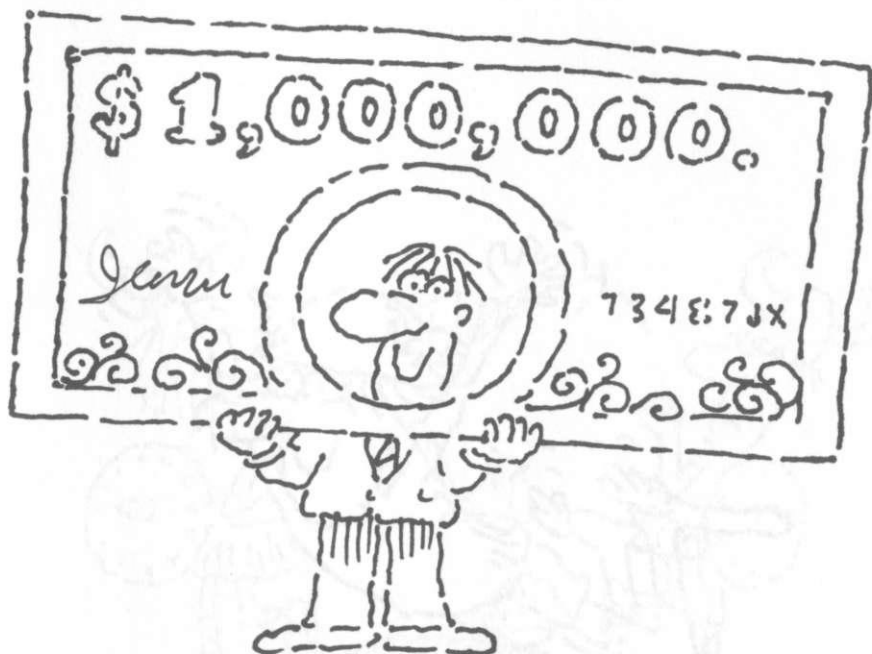
I heard that Michael and Jennifer got a good price when they sold their house.

Yes, they did. Now they're really **sitting pretty**. As a matter of fact, they're thinking of going on a long vacation.

I wish I were **in such a fortunate position**. I haven't had a vacation in years.



# Feel Like a Million Dollars



(feel wonderful)

I bumped into Nick at the barbershop yesterday. He looked great, but I noticed that he had a slight limp when he walked.

I guess you didn't know that he had an operation on his knee.

No, I didn't. How's he feeling?

He says he's **feeling like a million dollars** now. Apparently the pain in his knee is all gone.

It's good that he's **feeling so wonderful**. It must be a refreshing change not having to put up with all that discomfort.

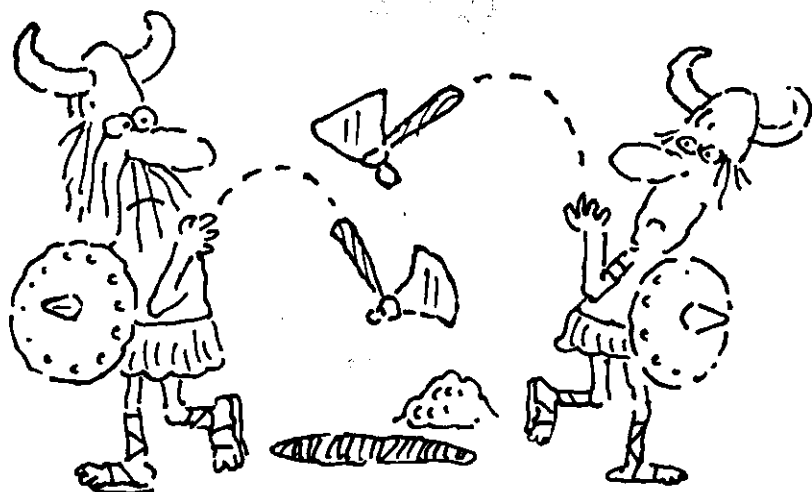
# Kick Up One's Heels



(celebrate)

The prerequisites for admission to the Theater Arts School are quite demanding, and those students who were finally accepted had reason to **kick up their heels**. It was only natural that those who made it through the exams and interviews would want to **celebrate the occasion by going out and having a good time**.

# Bury the Hatchet



**(make peace)**

Somebody told me that you and Doug had been quarreling over the construction site of the new building. That's true, but we worked out the problem and decided to **bury the hatchet**.

Glad to hear that. You guys have always worked well together.

Well, once we came to the conclusion that we both had the same goal in mind, we **put an end to our bitter feelings and made peace with each other**.

# Paint the Town Red



(carouse and have a good time)

---

How did you enjoy your vacation to Europe last summer?

It was marvelous. I'll never forget the time we had when we were in Rome. There was no end to things to see and do.

And how was the night life?

Great! We **painted the town red** the first three nights we were there.

Didn't that get to be pretty expensive?

I guess so, but we were so excited by all that the city had to offer that we **went out carousing** without thinking about the cost.

# Get Away Clean

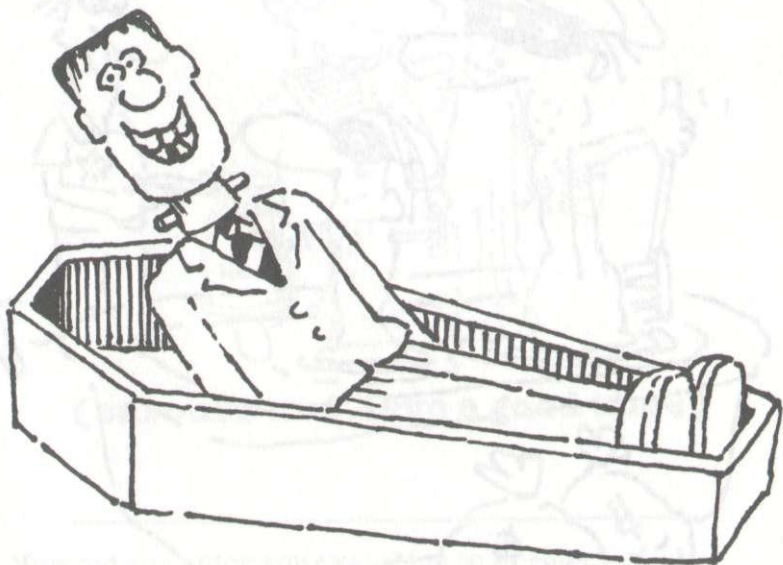


(escape punishment)

---

After robbing a neighborhood bank, the robbers sped off in a waiting car and **got away clean**. In spite of all police efforts to apprehend them, the criminals **were never caught and punished** for their crime.

# Come Alive



**(brighten up and become active)**

---

Up to now the guests at the party had been eating and making small talk, but when the rock band arrived, everyone **came alive**. When the band started playing all the latest rock hits, everybody **brightened up and became very active**.

# Do Your Best





# Toot One's Own Horn



(boast)

---

Michael's last novel was a best seller. He has no need to **toot his own horn** about his literary accomplishments. His readers and critics alike will now become aware of his talent. He won't have to **boast about his skill and success** as a writer.

# Stick to One's Guns

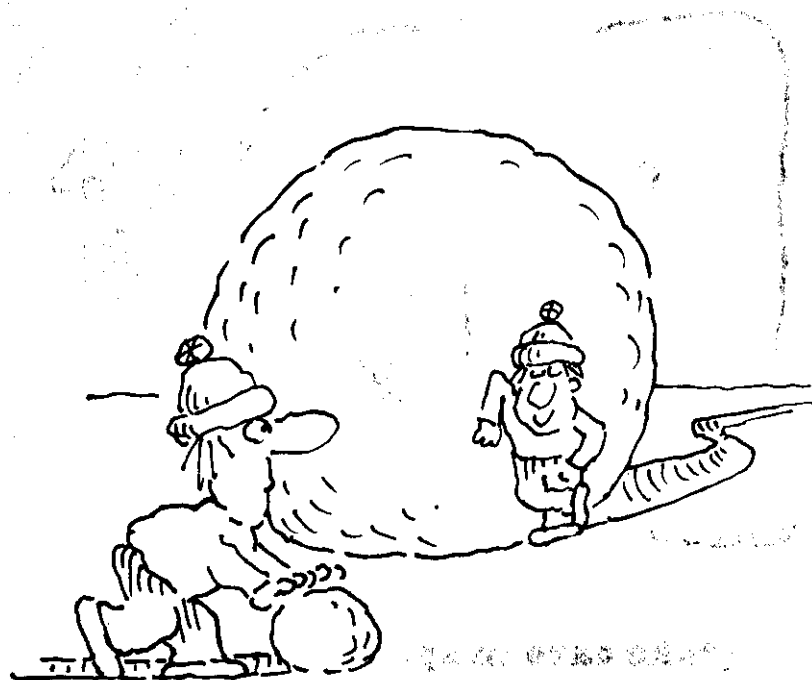


(maintain one's position)

---

In spite of the fact that it was inadvisable to have a controversial figure address the club, the chairman **stuck to his guns** and insisted that it would make good sense to hear the other side of the question before taking a vote on the issue. He **maintained his opinion and position on the matter**, even though a number of members tried to make him change his mind.

# Get the Ball Rolling



**(initiate action)**

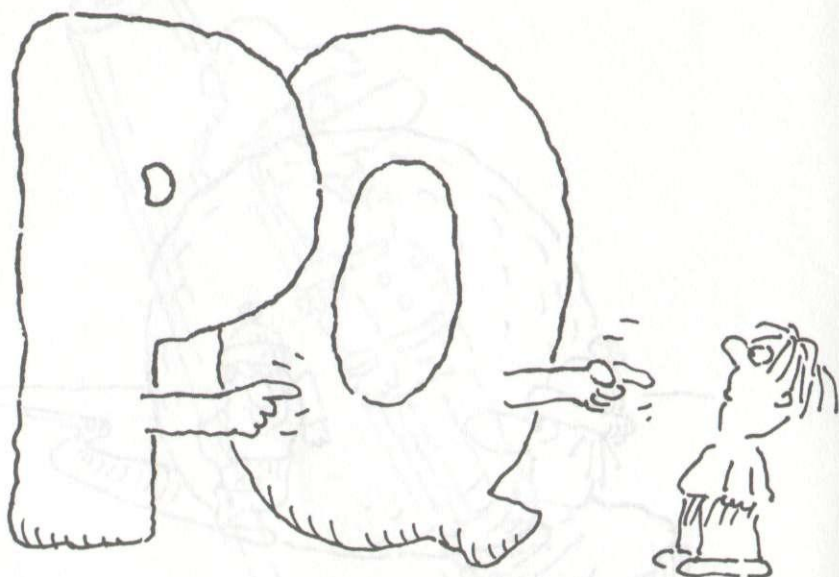
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Look! You've been talking about repairing the roof for weeks now. Don't you think it's about time to **get the ball rolling**?

I know, but I've been busy with other things. I promise I'll get to it this weekend.

The time to **start doing it** is right now! According to the weather report it's supposed to rain tomorrow.

# Mind One's P's and Q's



**(take care in speech and action)**

---

Listen, Larry. If you want an invitation to Clarissa's party you'd better **mind your P's and Q's**. But I haven't been doing anything to offend her. I'll tell you one thing. You're going to have to **be careful of what you say and how you act** around Susan. Come on! Susan and I are just friends. I know that, but Clarissa is the jealous type. She's liable to think that something is going on between the two of you.

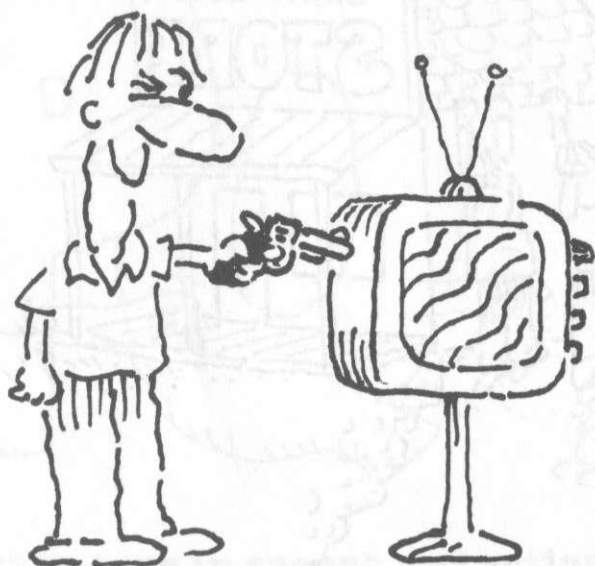
# Hang On



(persevere)

During the depression years the Smiths had a great deal of trouble with their business, but somehow or other they were able to **hang on**. Although they almost lost their store, they managed to **persevere** until things got better.

# Give It One's Best Shot



(try hard)

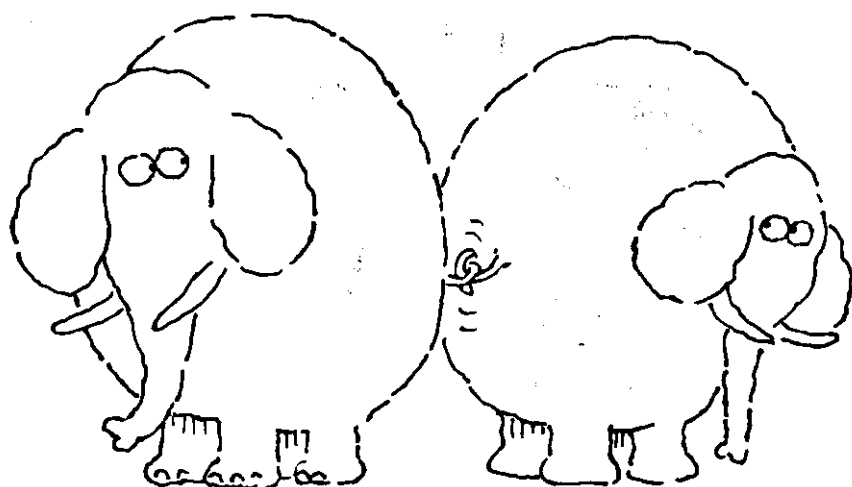
Can you do anything about repairing this TV set?  
I'm not much of an electrician, but I'll **give it my best shot**.

Many thanks. I'd be most appreciative.

OK. I'll **try my hardest** to fix it, but I'm not promising that I'll succeed.

At this point, I'll take all the help I can get.

# Make Ends Meet



(pay one's bills)

It's almost impossible trying to keep up with the high cost of living.

It's true. Things are so expensive nowadays that it's very difficult to **make ends meet**.

You know, even with Lucie's salary, our combined income is **hardly enough to pay all the bills**.

# Get the Jump on Someone



(get the advantage over someone)

Did you have a nice time at the school dance last night?  
To tell you the truth, I would have enjoyed myself more  
if I had been able to go with Teresa instead of Elena.

Why didn't you ask Teresa in the first place?

I was about to, but Benito **got the jump on me**.

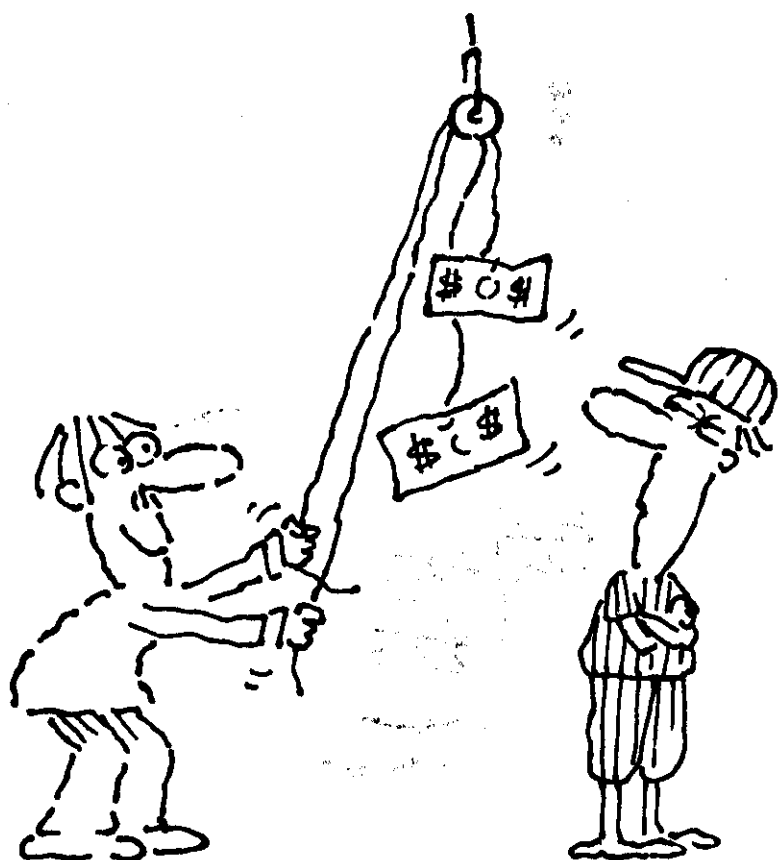
How did he manage to do that?

He **got the advantage over me** by telling Teresa that if  
she went with him, he'd take her out to dinner and  
then to the dance in his brand new convertible.

Well, now, she can hardly be blamed for accepting an offer like that!



# Pull Strings



(exert influence)

Steven had been unsuccessful in getting tickets for the opening game of the season. However, he **pulled some strings** with the manager of the team and got excellent seats. There's no doubt that he got the tickets only by **exerting his influence with a person important enough to help him get what he wanted.**

# Spread Oneself Too Thin



(become involved in too many activities)

---

Although Teresa has always been an excellent student, her marks have been going down lately because she is **spreading herself too thin**. Besides spending a great deal of time in after-school sports, she got a part-time job as a clerk in a department store. It's only natural that her grades would suffer. She is **becoming involved in so many activities that she cannot devote the time that it takes to excel in any one of them**.

# Go to Bat for Someone



**(help out and support someone)**

Is it true that Don got into some trouble at work last week?

Yes, he did. He was reproached for not turning in his sales reports, but his secretary **went to bat for him**.

What was she able to do?

She **helped him out a great deal** by admitting that she had misplaced the reports that he gave her to be typed.

So, it was her fault, not his.

Right.

# Duck Soup



(easy, effortless)

Can you help me hook up my new stereo equipment? I'm having quite a bit of trouble with all these connections.

Sure. That's **duck soup** for me.

Well, with all your experience in electronics, I have no doubt that it will be **very easy** for you to do.

No problem. Glad to help out.

# You Don't Say



# Money Talks



**(money can influence people)**

We've been waiting for three months to get delivery on our car, and people who put in their order after us have already gotten theirs.

Well, **money talks**. Why don't you try giving the dealer a little something extra to move things along?

I know full well that **money has the power to influence people**, but I refuse to pay extra for a service that is owed to me as a client.

If you want to have your car maybe you'd better reconsider.

# Let Sleeping Dogs Lie



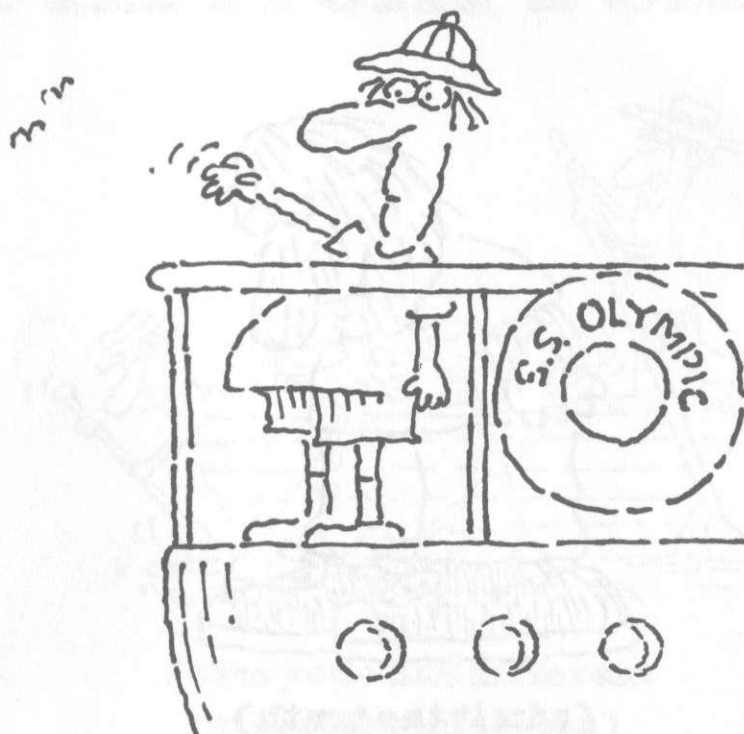
**(do not agitate a potential  
source of trouble)**

You'd better not say anything to the owner of the building about painting your apartment. If I were you I'd **let sleeping dogs lie**. The last time you asked him to do some repairs, he raised your rent.

You're telling me **not to make trouble if I don't have to**, but I'm going to risk making him angry, since I can no longer stand to look at the paint peeling off the walls.



# Shape Up or Ship Out



**(behave properly or leave!)**

Al had been constantly reprimanded for being negligent on the job. Finally, in desperation his supervisor exclaimed, "**Shape up or ship out!**" Al admitted that he had not been taking his work seriously and realized that he should **be more conscientious about his job or he would be discharged.**

# If the Shoe Fits, Wear It



(admit the truth)

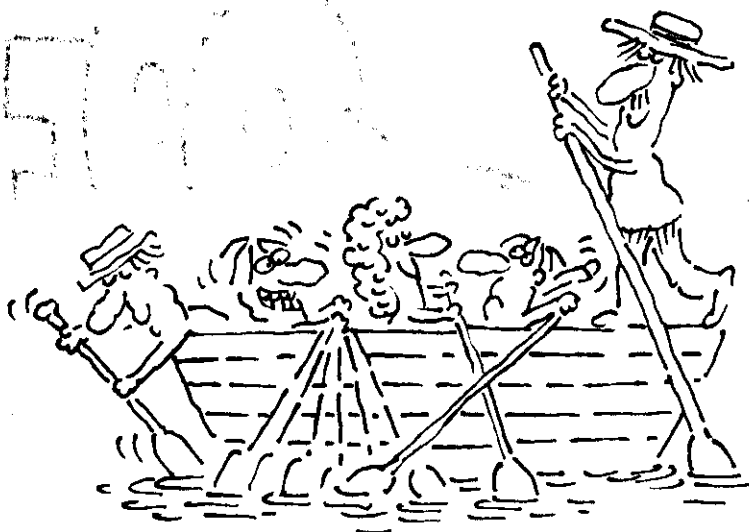
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Joe feels rather badly because he's always being criticized for his sloppy personal appearance.

With reason. "**If the shoe fits, wear it,**" I always say. Still, I can't help feeling sorry for the guy. I know that

**what people say about him is true, and that he should admit it.** He doesn't seem to want to improve his appearance. Evidently, he himself can't see anything wrong with the way he looks.

# Different Strokes For Different Folks



**(everyone has different  
interests and tastes)**

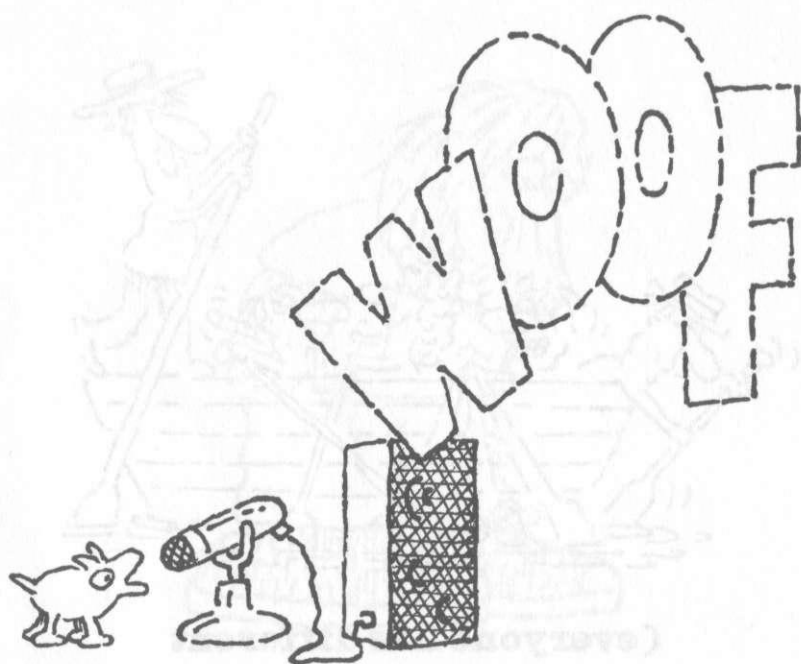
It's hard to understand how Millie and Ron ever got together. She has always gone in for sailing and he can't stand to be on water. He enjoys the opera and she likes jazz.

You know what they say: "**Different strokes for different folks!**"

You don't have to tell me that **everyone has different interests and tastes**. I still can't figure out what attracted them to each other in the first place.

Haven't you heard that opposites attract?

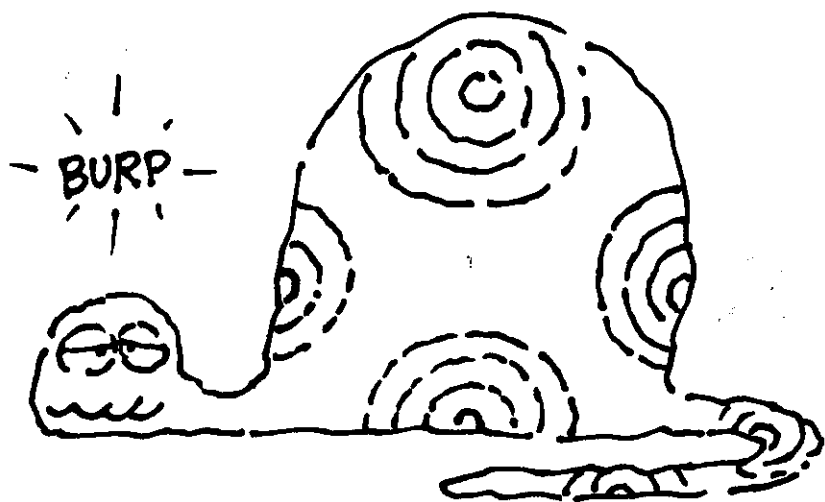
# Bark Worse Than One's Bite



**(not as bad-tempered as one appears)**

On occasion Mr. Hopkins speaks harshly to his students, especially when they fail to complete their homework assignment. Nevertheless, they all know that his **bark is worse than his bite**. He threatens to keep them after school and to inform their parents, but he's **not really as bad-tempered as he appears**.

# Eyes Are Bigger Than One's Stomach



**(take more food than one can eat)**

---

Chris, why don't you finish eating that third helping of dessert?

I guess my **eyes were bigger than my stomach** when I said I wanted more.

I'm not surprised. The same thing happens to me. Sometimes, when I'm really hungry, I'll **take more food than I can possibly eat.**

# Put One's Money Where One's Mouth Is



(follow through with  
a stated intention)

---

You've been promising to take us to Disneyland for the past two years. Since the kids are free, how about **putting your money where your mouth is?** You don't have to remind me. I have every intention of **doing exactly what I said I'd do.** But you yourself know that in the past we have been unable to go because of other financial obligations. Things have eased up and it looks like we'll be able to go this year.

# The Early Bird Catches the Worm



(arriving early gives one an advantage)

---

Marc, the lines for the rock festival are going to be miles long! If you expect to get tickets for you and Marika, remember that old saying, "**The early bird catches the worm.**"

I guess you're right. Marika is looking forward to the concert, and I'd hate to disappoint her. I'll **get up real early to get a place at the head of the line.** That way I'll get the tickets I want, for sure!

# People Who Live in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones



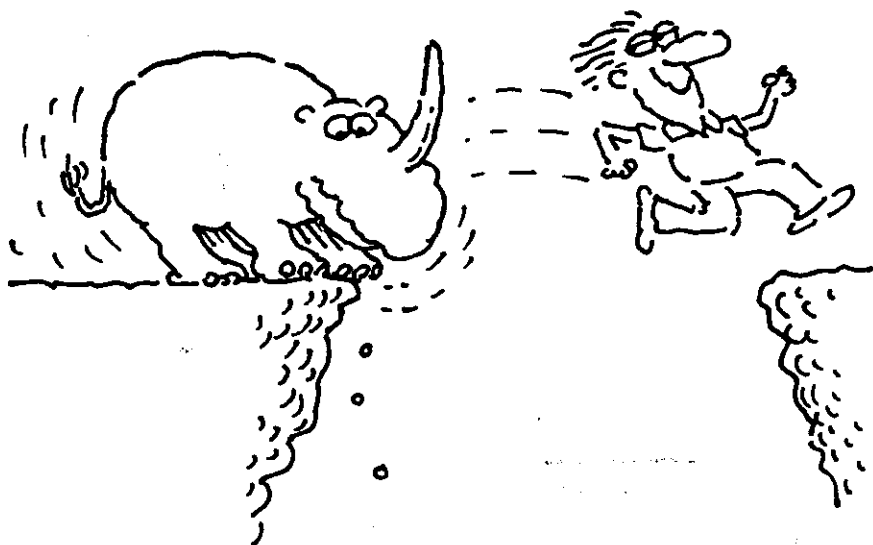
**(one should not criticize when  
one is equally at fault)**

---

Janet has often criticized her friend Lois for driving too fast, yet she herself has had her license suspended for exceeding the speed limit. Lois once tried to tell her that **people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones**, but it didn't do much good. Janet simply didn't accept the fact that she **should not pass judgment on other people when she is just as bad as they are**.



# All's Well That Ends Well



(a successful outcome  
is worth the effort)

---

Hi, Benito. How are things going?

Well, everything's OK now. Remember that teaching job for which I applied?

Yes, I sure do.

Well, I was finally hired, but I had a bit of a rough time before I got it. Between all that paperwork and all those interviews, I'm all worn out. Thank goodness it's all over.

Great! **All's well that ends well.** After all that you went through, I'm happy to hear that **things finally turned out satisfactorily for you.**

Yes. I'm happy, too. It was really worth the effort.

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